

Fire Chiefs Plead with Media for Help in Reducing Fire Fatalities

Fairfax, Va., Feb. 16, 2007... The International Association of Fire Chiefs is pleading with the media to help us inform the public of the high number of house fires with fatalities that have occurred since the beginning of February. “We have lost too many people in home fires in the last two weeks,” said President Chief Jim Harmes. “Last night, six were killed in a house fire in Louisiana, two in house fires in Tennessee and one in my own community in Grand Blanc, Michigan. It is mid-February and by media reports, 59 people in the U.S. have perished in house fires in 17 states since the beginning of this month. We have got to do something,” said Harmes.

“These are not just statistics; these are lives—lives of the people we serve in our communities. These are the same lives that you, the media, serve. Help us to get the word out to our readers and listeners. Our citizens now have more protection available for their homes than ever before and yet people are losing their lives because they are not taking this protection seriously.”

A quick check of media reports for the first 16 days of February reveals 59 house-fire fatalities. Thirty fatalities were single or double fatalities, and 29 deaths resulted from just six house fires and were counted as multiple fatalities (three or more individuals). A list of these deaths by date and location is found at the end of this release.

“These are not just numbers; these are personal tragedies that each of us as a fire chief feels every time a life is lost. Help us prevent these needless tragedies. Help us get the word out to those communities that we—the media and the fire departments—both serve,” said Harmes.

Please, help us pass along these life-saving suggestions:

- Check smoke and carbon monoxide alarms to be sure they are working properly.
- Have an escape plan with a meeting place.
- Once you exit your home, DO NOT return. Too many people lose their lives going back into a burning home.
- Stoves are not made for heating homes.
- Supplemental heating devices should be used and maintained in accordance with manufacturer recommendations. Keep combustibles clear. Do not leave supplemental heating devices unattended.
- If you are burning wood in your fireplace, make sure your chimneys are properly maintained. That goes for your furnace, as well.
- If candles are necessary, use them in a safe environment in a fireproof container and away from children. Do not leave them unattended.
- And for the long term, consider getting a residential fire sprinkler. According to statistics, the risk of death by fire is reduced by 82 percent when smoke detectors are accompanied with residential fire sprinklers.

List of fire fatalities, based on media reports, for the first part of February:

Feb. 3	New York (Long Island)	family of three
Feb. 3	West Virginia (Bens Run)	one fatality
Feb. 3	Wisconsin (Marinette County)	two fatalities
Feb. 4	New York (Mount Vernon)	one fatality
Feb. 4	Texas (San Antonio)	one fatality
Feb. 5	Ohio (St. Marys)	one fatality
Feb. 6	Rhode Island (Providence)	one fatality
Feb. 6	Tennessee (Maryville)	family of four
Feb. 7	Kentucky (Bardstown)	family of 10
Feb. 7	Washington (Selah)	one fatality

Feb. 8	Kansas (Topeka)	one fatality
Feb. 8	New York (Brooklyn)	two fatalities
Feb. 8	New York (Newburgh)	one fatality
Feb. 8	Wisconsin (Milwaukee)	two fatalities
Feb. 9	Delaware (Wilmington)	one fatality
Feb. 10	Minnesota (St. Paul)	one fatality
Feb. 10	Pennsylvania (South Philadelphia)	one fatality
Feb. 11	Connecticut (Waterbury)	one fatality
Feb. 11	Ohio (Mount Vernon)	two fatalities
Feb. 11	Pennsylvania (West Philadelphia)	family of five
Feb. 11	Texas (Fresno)	four fatalities
Feb. 12	Michigan (Saginaw)	one fatality
Feb. 13	Indiana (Indianapolis)	one fatality
Feb. 14	Nevada (Las Vegas)	two fatalities
Feb. 14	Washington (Snohomish)	one fatality
Feb. 15	Delaware (Ogletown)	one fatality
Feb. 15	Michigan (Grand Blanc)	one fatality
Feb. 15	Pennsylvania (Mount Joy)	one fatality
Feb. 15	Pennsylvania (West Philadelphia)	family of three
Feb. 16	Tennessee (Palmyra)	one fatality
Feb. 16	Tennessee (Smyrna)	one fatality