



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Practice your escape plan; sign up for the Great American Fire Drill

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Home fires resulted in 87 fire-related fatalities in the state of Alabama in 2006, ranking Alabama as the third worst in the nation in deaths and injuries. While progress has been made in recent years in educating families about fire safety and smoke alarms, too many people continue to die from fires.

The Alabama Fire Marshal's office points out that one of the main causes behind these tragic statistics is that people are not getting out of their homes in time. The National Fire Protection Association has found that while two-thirds of Americans have an escape plan in case of a fire, only one-third have practiced it. Also, most Americans greatly underestimate the time it takes until a fire turns deadly.

State Fire Marshal Ed Paulk said, "You can have as little as two minutes to escape your home in a fire. We want everyone to create an escape plan in case of a fire and to practice it during the Alabama Statewide Fire Drill this Friday, Oct. 12. Alabama's theme is 'Plan 2 Escape.' We want our citizens to plan and practice two ways out of any structure in case of fire."

In furtherance of this goal, State Farm Insurance has made a grant of \$15,000 to provide DVDs for each elementary school and fire station in the state and to print pamphlets for students and parents throughout Alabama. Individuals are encouraged to visit www.sparky.org to learn how to participate and sign up for the National Fire Drill. This site has a wealth of information for everyone and is especially appealing to children.

The Alabama Agency Fire Safety Group works to provide fire safety messages to all Alabama citizens. This group is comprised of the Alabama Department of Public Health, the Alabama Fire College, the American Red Cross of Central Alabama, local fire departments, the State Fire Marshal's Office, State Farm Insurance and the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

One fire prevention program that has been effective in saving lives is the Alabama Smoke Alarm Initiative which provides home fire safety education and smoke alarm installations to high-risk communities. This initiative is administered by the Injury Prevention Division of the Alabama Department of Public Health and funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In 2007-2008, these counties are Dallas, Fayette and Pickens.

Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer, said, "Since its inception in 2001, the Alabama Smoke Alarm Initiative has worked with 23 fire departments in 13 counties and has documented that 61 lives have been saved as a result. We join our partners in urging everyone to make sure their homes are as safe as possible and to be particularly careful, especially when cooking and smoking."

Other fire-prevention partnerships involving the Alabama Department of Public Health are as follows:

- A project with the Office of Minority Health to reach Alabama's Hispanic population by translating fire safety publications into Spanish and distributing them directly to the populations they serve.
- The Injury Prevention Division continues its partnership with the Alabama Fire College to provide Risk Watch© training to classrooms across Alabama. During the 2005-2006 school year more than 8,000 students received this invaluable injury prevention education.
- The Alabama Smoke Alarm Initiative collaborates with the State Fire Marshal's office on an initiative designed to reach individuals with special needs, including persons with hearing and visual impairments.

To learn more about home fire safety, contact Samille Jackson at 800-252-1818 or visit the ADPH Web site at www.adph.org/injuryprevention.