

For Immediate Release  
Alaska Department of Public Safety  
Division of Fire and Life Safety

Mahlon Greene  
907-746-5062  
[mahlon.greene@alaska.gov](mailto:mahlon.greene@alaska.gov)

## Call to Action

The Alaska Division of Fire and Life Safety joins United State Fire Administrator Greg Cade in asking all residents in the nation to make sure that all homes have working smoke alarms. Eighteen Alaska residents lost their lives due to fire in 2008. The majority of these senseless deaths occurred in structures with no operating smoke alarms. Many of the structures had no smoke alarms installed and one had a smoke alarm that did not function. Many Alaskans lived to see 2009 due to working smoke alarms in their homes. In 2008 fire departments around the state reported numerous cases in which families were alerted to a fire in the home by working smoke alarms allowing them time to escape without injury.

Alaska statute (AS 18.70.095) requires all dwelling units to have smoke detection devices (smoke alarms) installed and maintained to operate. David Tyler, the Alaska State Fire Marshal, reminds everyone that failure to comply with this statute is a class B misdemeanor and requires a mandatory court appearance. Upon conviction of a class B misdemeanor, the defendant can be fined up to \$2000.00 or be required to spend up to ninety days in jail. If an organization is the defendant, the fine can be up to \$25, 000.00. If injuries or death occur in a structure fire and there were no working smoke alarms, the owner or responsible party could be held liable in a civil suit.

Please make sure you have working smoke alarms in your home. The Division of Fire and Life Safety offers a free monthly reminder by email to test your smoke alarms. This service is available by logging on to the Division of Fire and Life Safety's web site <http://www.akburny.com/>, and under Quick Links click on Smoke Alarm Reminder.

The US Fire Administration has also released this media release on January 6<sup>th</sup> 2009.

# Media Advisory

January 8, 2009

**Contact:**

**USFA Press Office:** 301-447-1853

**Washington DC Fire Press Office:** 202-345-6371

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**FIRE SERVICE LEADERSHIP TO ISSUE A NATIONAL CALL FOR WORKING SMOKE ALARMS TO PROTECT ALL RESIDENTS**

Washington, D.C.- Philadelphia Fire Commissioner Lloyd Ayers, Baltimore Fire Chief James Clack and Washington, D.C. Fire Chief Dennis Rubin will join United States Fire Administrator (USFA) Greg Cade to ask all residents of this nation to install, maintain and test their smoke alarms today. This national effort is a result of one of the deadliest holiday seasons in recent memory and several significant fires in the first days of 2009. Since Thanksgiving 2008, there have been more than 158 fatal fires in the United States resulting in over 200 fire fatalities. You are invited to join USFA Administrator Cade and these metropolitan fire chiefs.

**NEWS CONFERENCE AND MEDIA AVAILABILITY:**

**When:** Wednesday, January 7, 2009 at 4pm.

**Where:** Washington D.C. Fire Station #3  
439 New Jersey Ave., NW  
Washington, D.C.

“The 2008 holiday season and the start of 2009 may be recorded as one of the deadliest for residential fires in recent memory of the fire service,” said Cade. “Not only has there been a significant number of preventable fires, but the occurrences of multiple fatalities resulting from these fires are simply unacceptable within our nation. There should be a smoke alarm protecting every person in this nation today, particularly as we sleep.”

- On Christmas Eve, four died in a house fire in Mount Sterling, Kentucky. All of the victims were children and officials cannot be certain whether smoke alarms worked.
- Four adults and three children died in a southwest Philadelphia home the day after Christmas when gasoline was used to fuel a kerosene heater. There were no working smoke alarms in the home.
- In Baltimore, two people died in a fire above a grocery store. A young couple died in the blaze and investigators found no working smoke alarms in the building.
- In Washington, D.C. on New Year's Day, six individuals died in a house fire on Jackson Street, Northeast. While the cause was listed as accidental/electrical, officials are not sure smoke alarms worked properly.
- Yesterday, eight people died in a residential fire in Oswego County, New York. The cause is still under investigation.

- Yesterday, three people, including two teenage girls, died after an early morning house fire in Ringling, Oklahoma. Officials say the fire started early Monday morning while at least two of the victims were still in bed. For the two teenage girls who lived inside the house, this was supposed to be their first day back to school after winter break. Officials say once flames broke out at 4 a.m., the girls, along with another relative, never made it out of the home.

In the event of a fire, a properly installed and maintained smoke alarm can save your life and those of your loved ones. Smoke alarms are a very important means of preventing home fire fatalities by providing an early warning signal so you and your family can escape. They are one of the best safety devices you can buy and install to protect yourself, your family, and your home. You can prevent tragedies simply by testing and maintaining your smoke alarms and practicing a fire escape plan. All smoke alarms in your house should be tested once a month and their batteries replaced annually or as indicated by the manufacturer's instructions.

For additional information regarding smoke alarms, visit <http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/citizens/focus/>

For additional information regarding the United States Fire Administration, visit <http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/nfa>

*The USFA reminds everyone to have a comprehensive fire protection plan that includes smoke alarms, residential sprinklers and practicing a home fire escape plan*

###