**SMOKING-RELATED FIRE DEATHS NEWS RELEASE #1**

DEPARTMENTS SHOULD WORK WITH SURROUNDING AREA AGENCIES ON NEWS RELEASES TO AVOID DUPLICATION WHEN ISSUING TO MEDIA.

**CONTACT:
PHONE:**

**FOLLOWING A FIRE THAT [KILLED/INJURED] [NUMBER OF THOSE KILLED/INJURED], [YOUR DEPARTMENT] IS ASKING RESIDENTS TO TALK WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS WHO SMOKE**

*Smoking is the Leading Cause of Fatal Fires in Minnesota*

[YOUR CITY/COUNTY], Minn. – [NUMBER OF PEOPLE] were [KILLED/INJURED] on [DATE/DAY] in what appears to be a smoking-related fire.

The [NAME OF YOUR DEPARTMENT] responded to a fire at approximately [TIME] on [DATE/DAY] in the [XXX block] of [STREET NAME]. [MORE PUBLIC DATA ABOUT THE FIRE. RESPONDING AGENCIES. WHAT FIREFIGHTERS ENCOUNTERED AT THE SCENE. ANYONE TRANSPORTED? ETC.]

Smoking is the leading cause of fatal fires in Minnesota. In [YOUR CITY/AREA], [XX] people have been [KILLED/INJURED] in smoking-related fires over the past [XX] years. We are working with the Minnesota Department of Public Safety’s State Fire Marshal Division (SFMD) to help reduce the number of smoking-related fire deaths in [YOUR CITY/AREA].

“This is a tragic situation. We do not want anyone else in our community to suffer through anything like this,” said [FIRE CHIEF/FIRE OFFICIAL’S NAME, TITLE. “You can help. We are asking family members and anyone in contact with older smokers to look in on them and help them be safe.”

Follow these tips to prevent a smoking-related fire:

* Smoke outside and extinguish cigarettes in a sturdy ashtray filled with sand or water.
* Do not discard cigarettes in potted plants, leaves, mulch or other vegetation.
* Do not smoke while on oxygen or while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
* Before leaving a room where people have been smoking, carefully check under cushions and furniture. Check for embers, cigarette butts or matches.
* Never smoke in bed.
* Do not smoke while on medical oxygen or in a home where medical oxygen is used.
* Protect vulnerable smokers. Keep a watchful eye on elderly and disabled smokers; make sure they follow safety precautions.
* Talk to family, friends and loved ones about the fire-related dangers of smoking.

A smoke alarm is a person’s best defense should a fire start in the home. Homeowners should install smoke alarms on every level of their home, and outside each sleeping area. It is also important to plan and practice home escape drills with everyone in the home at least twice a year.

Learn more at sfm.dps.mn.gov [OR YOUR WEBSITE IF SMOKING-RELATED INFO IS AVAILABLE]