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OHIO DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

OHIO'S FIRE FATALITIES HIT 25-YEAR LOW IN 2011

State Fire Marshal Larry Flowers announced today that Ohio's fire fatalities hit a 25-year low in 2011. The number of fire-related fatalities dropped nearly 18% from 2010 to 2011.

During the 2011 calendar year, 126 fire-related fatalities were recorded by the Division of State Fire Marshal through reports from Ohio's fire departments, the State Fire Marshal's Fire & Explosion Investigation Bureau and the media. The previous low of 130 fire-related fatalities occurred in 2007. There were 153 fire-related fatalities reported in 2010.

"Smoke alarms are proven to save lives," said State Fire Marshal Larry Flowers. "I'm pleased by the efforts of Ohio's first responders, educators, journalists and citizens in raising awareness of the need for working smoke alarms which undoubtedly played a role in the reduction of fire deaths." But the Fire Marshal stressed this is a milestone and that fire safety efforts can't stop with this news.

State Fire Marshal Flowers attributes the reduction in fire fatalities to a number of efforts, including fire safety education programs, increased media attention to the need for working smoke alarms in homes, and innovative training for Ohio's firefighters.

An example of the year's decrease due to increased fire safety awareness can be found in Lawrence County. In 2010, the county suffered eight fire-related fatalities giving it the highest per-capita rate in the State of Ohio. The county's firefighters responded by distributing more than 250 smoke alarms and conducting more than 50 fire safety programs. Lawrence County did not have a single fire-related death in 2011.

State Fire Marshal Flowers said he is still concerned the message about working smoke alarms hasn't reached everyone. More than 90% of Ohio's fire-related fatalities occurred in homes with no confirmed working smoke alarms.

The Division of State Fire Marshal recommends working smoke alarms on every level of the home and inside each sleeping area. Smoke alarms should be tested monthly and alkaline batteries should be replaced twice a year. Smoke alarms should be replaced every 10 years or according to the manufacturer's specifications. In addition to smoke alarms, families should have and practice a home fire escape plan with multiple exit routes and should establish a safe meeting place outside the home.

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