



## NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Feb. 27, 2009

Contact: Shelley Szafraniec, APR  
Community Information Specialist  
(386) 822-5062, ext. 2871

### **FIRE-RELATED DEATHS HIGH IN JANUARY 2009; FIRE SAFETY ENCOURAGED**

Several national associations are joining together to spread the message of fire safety after the start of 2009 saw an increase in the number of fire deaths typically reported each January. A report from 28 states by the National Association of State Fire Marshals shows that at least 173 people were killed in January, compared with 131 in January 2008. Almost two-thirds of those killed in January 2009 were children.

"You never like to hear statistics like these," said James Tauber, Volusia County Fire Services director. "We take an aggressive approach when it comes to fire safety and encourage everyone to also take an aggressive stance and make sure they practice fire safety year round."

In 2009, Volusia County Fire Services has responded to one fire call that had a fatality. But, even one is too many according to Tauber.

"Most people die in fires because of the toxic smoke, not the flames," said Tauber. "Carbon monoxide 'suffocates' the body, preventing it from receiving oxygen. Most people die before the fire gets to them."

Volusia County Fire Services, as well as some city fire agencies throughout Volusia County, offer free smoke alarms and installation assistance to residents. Residents are encouraged to contact their local fire department for smoke alarm information.

#### **Fire safety tips**

- Citizens should install smoke alarms in every bedroom, outside all sleeping areas, and on every level of the home. In addition, smoke alarms should be interconnected so when one alarm sounds, they all sound.
- Check smoke alarms monthly by pushing the test button. If you cannot reach the button easily, use a broom handle.

-more-

[www.volusia.org](http://www.volusia.org)

#### **V O L U S I A C O U N T Y C O U N C I L**

**FRANK BRUNO JR.**  
COUNTY CHAIR

**JOIE ALEXANDER**  
AT-LARGE, VICE CHAIR

**ANDY KELLY**  
DISTRICT 1

**JOSHUA J. WAGNER**  
DISTRICT 2

**JACK HAYMAN**  
DISTRICT 3

**CARL PERSIS**  
DISTRICT 4

**PATRICIA NORTHEY**  
DISTRICT 5

- Do not remove the batteries from smoke alarms to put in other appliances such as personal stereos or games.
- Smoke alarms wear out over time and should be replaced if more than 10 years old.
- Keep smoke alarms clean as dust and debris can interfere with their operation. Vacuum over and around your smoke alarm regularly.
- Consider installing a 10-year lithium battery-powered smoke alarm, which is sealed so it cannot be tampered with or opened.
- Hard-wired smoke alarms with battery backups need to be tested monthly and batteries should be replaced yearly.
- Teach children what the smoke alarm sounds like and what to do – leave the building immediately by crawling low under the smoke – when they hear the sound.
- Residential sprinklers can save lives. Citizens building or remodeling a home should consider installing residential sprinklers.
- Smoking is one of the leading causes of fatal fires. Smokers should always make sure cigarettes are extinguished in ash trays. Never smoke in bed.
- Cooking causes many fires. When cooking, never leave food unattended.
- If cooking smoke sets off the alarm, do not disable it. Turn on the range fan, open a window or wave a towel near the alarm.
- Develop a fire escape plan that identifies two ways out of each room and a family meeting place outside.
- Make sure your plan allows for special needs in your household, such as small children and elderly occupants. If everyone knows what to do, everyone can get out quickly.
- Practice your plan at least twice a year.
- Studies have shown that children and adults may not awaken to the sound of a smoke alarm. When practicing your plan, test to see if everyone awakens to the alarm. If some family members sleep through the alarm, develop a buddy system for waking each other up and meeting outside.
- If the smoke alarm sounds, go to your closest exit. If there is smoke blocking your way, turn and use your second way out. If you must exit through smoke, get low and go under the smoke. Don't take time to pick up belongings; just get out and help others get out. Move fast, but stay calm.

For more information about fire prevention, please call (386) 736-5940 or visit [www.volusia.org](http://www.volusia.org). For more information about the national report please visit the National Fire Protection Association web site at [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org).