

## Fire Marshal's Office Distributes 20,000 Smoke Alarms

Written by Debbie Gregory  
Tuesday, December 11, 2012

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The State of Tennessee Fire Marshal's Office received a federal grant for 20,000 smoke alarms to be distributed across the state in counties that are ranked the highest in fatal fire deaths.

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Lafayette Fire Chief Keith Scruggs says up until this year Tennessee was ranked second in the nation with residential fire deaths. "It's went down a little bit," said Scruggs. "I think we are ranked fifth or sixth now, but that's still bad."

"The state's intent is to try and get a smoke detector in everybody's home," said the Chief.

"We're not trying to bring people's houses up to code. What we are doing is trying to make sure that functional smoke alarms are in everyone's homes and for us that is Lafayette and Macon County.

"Our primary responsibility is the City of Lafayette," said Chief Scruggs, "but we're not going to leave out everybody else. The Red Boiling Springs and Willette Fire Department along with the City of Lafayette Fire Department, are working together in conjunction with the State Fire Marshal's Office. Right now we have smoke detectors here at the fire station and the way they want this done is a small survey. Where we put them in, how many we put in, and how many

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people live in the house and all that. Once again, we don't want to scare people off, thinking we are trying to bring their home up to code."

Chief Scruggs says over the next few weeks they are going to be conducting some programs to try and get people to call and let the department know if they don't have any smoke detectors or if they don't have enough. Also if they have them but the devices aren't working they will come out and fix the alarm.

"We need people to call us if they don't feel safe about their situation. We also have other smoke detectors that have been bought with donated money and if someone doesn't feel comfortable with us coming into their home, we will still give them smoke detectors. We want everybody in Macon County to be safe."

The chief said that rarely do you have someone to die in a house fire that has working smoke detectors. "The thing is, the quicker we get rid of these first hundred smoke detectors, we can get more and keep this program going."

In Tennessee during 2011 a fire department responded to an alarm every minute and a half. A fire department responded to a fire every 20 minutes. One structure fire was reported every 55 minutes. One home structure fire was reported every hour and 10 minutes. One home fire injury was reported ever 42 hours. One home fire death occurred every five days. Also last year Tennessee had a fire dollar loss of \$365 million. There were 271 fire related injuries and 98 fire related deaths. 144 fire fighters were injured, but no fire fighters died in 2011.

According to the Tennessee State Fire Marshal's Office (SFMO), Tennessee's fire mortality rate for civilians has been among the highest in the nation. The SFMO is on a mission to change that.

"Macon County is a high risk county socially and economically for someone dying in a house fire," noted Scruggs. "The State of Tennessee did a study and what they projected was where some of the next fire deaths will be. Unfortunately Macon County is one of those places."

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Scruggs says in order to combat this, they need to get smoke detectors into these homes. "We don't want to prove the state right. We want to make sure that they are wrong."

Call the Lafayette Fire Department at 666-2190 and talk with a member about getting a free smoke detector.

Other high risk counties in Tennessee are: Carter, Greene, Johnson, Bedford, Grainger, Campbell, Carroll, Polk and Hawkins.