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State Officials Concerned by Increase in Fire Related Deaths and Injuries

(ANCHORAGE, Alaska)— Over the past weeks, several home fires have resulted in death and critical injuries to fellow Alaskans. These devastating incidents have prompted Governor Sean Parnell and State Fire Marshal David Tyler to emphasize the importance of practicing fire-safe behavior.

We have recently experienced several fires which resulted in fatalities and critical injuries. These fires occurred in Bethel, the Mat-Su Valley and the North Pole area. Eight Alaskans have died from fire this year, and although this number is below average, it does not take into account the upcoming winter months. Historically, fire-related incidents occur more often during winter due to the use of heating equipment, unattended holiday cooking, and holiday decorations near heat sources. Unfortunately, alcohol and/or drug use is often the leading contributor to injuries and deaths by fire. The Division of Fire and Life Safety encourages everyone to be especially careful during the next few months to avoid further tragedy.

“Sandy and I join the rest of the state in grieving the tragic loss of these Alaskans,” Governor Parnell said. “I urge Alaskans to take the time to check their home heating sources and smoke alarms which can protect families from the ravages of fire.”

Another alarming trend shows that 71% of fire fatalities within the last two years (2009, 2010) occurred in homes that did not have working smoke alarms. The smoke alarms used in many homes contain 9-volt batteries that should be replaced at least twice a year. However, smoke alarms powered by long-life lithium batteries, with a life span of up to 10 years, have been developed and are available for use. This means you may not need to replace your battery as often. Tyler adds, “I urge everyone to take a few minutes to check, test, and clean your smoke alarms to make sure they are functioning properly.”

For more information about smoke alarms, please visit our website at www.akburny.com, and click on “Smoke Alarm Reminder” under the Quick Links section. Anyone may sign up for a free monthly e-mail reminder to check their smoke alarms.

State Fire Marshal Tyler stated, “The first priority is to prevent the fire. However, working smoke alarms, planning and practicing your fire escape plan, and adding residential fire suppression sprinklers in your home can ensure your family’s safety if a devastating home fire occurs.”