



Virginia Department of Fire Programs
1005 Technology Park Drive
Richmond, Virginia 23059-4500

MEDIA ALERT

For Immediate Release

Release Date: January 10, 2008

Contact: Olufunke T. Owolabi, MPA
Virginia Department of Fire Programs
Policy and Communications Analyst
tel: 804.249.1982 e-mail: olufunke.owolabi@vdfp.virginia.gov
website: www.vafire.com

New USFA Smoking and Home Fires Campaign

RICHMOND, VIRGINIA: – The United States Fire Administration launched a new fire safety campaign, titled "Smoking and Home Fires" yesterday during a press conference at the Washington D.C. National Press Club.

The campaign, which targets home fires started by smoking materials, will attempt to educate the public, specifically smokers, about careless smoking practices that lead to deadly home fires. The campaign seeks to alert smokers and those who live with smokers about simple steps they can take to prevent smoking-related home fires. The theme for the campaign is "Put it out. All the way. Every time."

"This campaign is certainly an important one," said Virginia Department of Fire Programs Executive Director, W.G. Billy Shelton. "What makes it so important is that it presents another opportunity for Virginia's Fire Service to promote personal responsibility through fire safety practices. The truth of the matter is smoking-related home fires are particularly preventable. It is my hope that the message of this campaign prompts Virginia residents to take extra precautions, thus reducing home fire deaths and injuries caused by smoking materials."

In 2006, Virginia experienced 164 smoking-related house fires, a 22 percent increase from the previous year. These house fires caused approximately \$4,066,209 in property damages. To protect you and your family from smoking-related house fires, consider the following life-saving tips from the U.S. Fire Administration:

- If you must smoke, smoke outside.
- Use ashtrays with a wide, stable base that are hard to trip over - if it wobbles, it will not work!
- Put it out. All the way. Every time.

- Douse the ashtrays with water before you toss the butts into the trash.
- Do not smoke if you are drowsy.
- Do not smoke in bed
- If people smoke while at your home, be sure to check for cigarettes butts near the furniture and under sofa cushions before you call it a night.
- Never smoke while using oxygen.
- If you smoke, use reduced ignition cigarettes, commonly referred to as "fire-safe cigarettes."
- Place working smoke alarms on the ceiling of every level of your home.
- Have an escape plan and practice it. Plan two ways out of each room. Practice the escape plan at least twice a year.

For more information about the "Smoking and Home Fires" campaign visit www.usfa.dhs.gov/smoking.

-###-