

# Maryland State Fire Marshal

# *News Release*

**Martin O'Malley**  
Governor

**William E. Barnard**  
State Fire Marshal



## **MARYLAND FIRE RELATED DEATHS REACH RECORD LOW IN 2012**

**PIKESVILLE, MD** (January 10, 2013) – Preliminary data concerning the number of fatal fires investigated by or reported to the Office of the State Fire Marshal indicates 52 Marylanders succumbed to injuries related to hostile fires. This represents a 22% decrease in fire related deaths as compared to 67 deaths reported in 2011 and is 13% below the previous record low of 60 fire deaths recorded in 2006 and 2008. (The preliminary data for 2012 does not include fire victims that are currently receiving medical care for potentially life-threatening injuries.)

For several years now, the annual average number of fire deaths in Maryland has continued on a downward trend. The annual average number of fire deaths recorded during the past 20 years was 77, the 10 year average was 71 and during the past 5 years the annual average has fallen to 65. The highest number of fire deaths recorded in a single year over the past 30 years was experienced in 1988 when 129 victims succumbed to the effects of fire. Unfortunately, Maryland has already experienced five fire deaths in the first few days of 2013. This sad news reminds all of us that we must always remain vigilant and practice fire safety every day.

One of the significant factors in reducing the number of fire deaths in Maryland was legislation supported and signed into law by Governor Martin O'Malley requiring only fire safety compliant cigarettes to be sold in Maryland. The number of fire deaths with the known fire cause directly related to smoking materials has fallen consistently from 18 in 2009, to 12 in 2010, to 9 in 2011, and to 3 deaths in 2012.

The installation of residential fire sprinklers is another factor in the reduction of fire deaths. For more than 20 years now, all newly constructed multi-family dwellings have been equipped with life-saving fire sprinklers and they have been required in all newly constructed townhomes since 1992. Additionally, local initiatives requiring fire sprinklers in newly constructed one and two family homes across Maryland were bolstered by Governor O'Malley's signing of House Bill 366 and Senate Bill 602 on May 2, 2012. This legislation, when fully

implemented will mandate the installation of residential fire sprinklers in every newly constructed single-family home in Maryland with few exceptions. Currently, 14 Maryland counties, Baltimore City and numerous municipalities have proactively adopted fire sprinkler requirements. These fast acting devices protect home occupants by directly spraying water onto open flame during the early stages of a fire, thus allowing additional time to escape the effects of hostile fire.

Finally, the State Fire Marshal applauds the fire prevention efforts of Maryland's fire service in constantly promoting life saving information to the public. Fire safety programs involving educational outreach are another proven way to help Marylanders learn to protect themselves from injuries related to fire.

To survive a home fire, the State Fire Marshal recommends the following:

- Working smoke alarms should be located on every level of the home, in each sleeping area and in each sleeping room.
- Test smoke alarms monthly.
- Develop a home escape plan with a safe meeting place outside and practice the plan with all family members at least twice a year.
- If having a new home built, insist that fire sprinklers be installed if they are not required. **(According to the U. S. Fire Administration, smoke alarms combined with a residential fire sprinkler system increase surviving a fire by over 80%).**

*“Maryland’s fire service along with many partners in the public and private sectors have focused on proven fire and life safety strategies such as: working smoke alarms, home fire escape plans and residential fire sprinklers. Community outreach programs that emphasize personal responsibility for surviving a home fire are consistently showing positive results,”* stated the State Fire Marshal. *“I applaud the efforts of all who take on the role of informing Marylanders of the value of fire and injury prevention”.*



**Media contact: Bruce D. Bouch, Deputy State Fire Marshal; 443-324-6876**

The Office of the State Fire Marshal is an agency of the Department of State Police dedicated to helping protect citizens from fire and explosion through a comprehensive program of education, inspection, investigation and fire protection engineering. For more information on fire safety call 1-800-525-3124, log onto our website at: [www.mdsp.org/firemarshal](http://www.mdsp.org/firemarshal) and/or <http://facebook.com/MarylandStateFireMarshal>.