NEWS RELEASE
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH
RSA Tower   201 Monroe Street, Suite 914   Montgomery, AL 36104
Phone 334-206-5300   Fax 334-206-5534
www.adph.org

Use candles with care

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Amanda Calhoun
(334) 206-7063
amandacalhoun@adph.state.al.us

The use of decorative candles is a growing concern as more people are being injured or killed in home fires caused by candles. To address this issue, "Use Candles with Care," has been designated as the theme this year by the National Fire Protection Association for Fire Prevention Week, Oct. 9-15, 2005.

Since 2000, the Alabama State Fire Marshal's Office has recorded 13 deaths from fire in the state due to the improper use of candles. The incidence of fires started in the home by candles has been increasing nationally since 1995. The latest data provided by the association indicated a 15 percent increase in candle fires from 2000-2001.

"Candle-related home fires are a growing concern as the use of candles is increasing, whether it's for decoration or as a light source during power outages. But, many people might not be aware of how dangerous the improper use of candles can be," said Amanda Calhoun, fire safety educator with the Alabama Department of Public Health.

Factors contributing to candle-causing fires include the following:

- Leaving lit candles unattended or near combustible materials
- Using candles as a light source
- Leaving children alone in rooms with lit candles

As the incidence of candle fires increases, so does the risk for people to be killed or injured. According to a 2001 NFPA survey, an estimated 190 people were killed in home fires started by candles. This survey also estimates that for every person killed, approximately eight people are injured. Those at greatest risk to suffer from death or injury include young children and families living in poverty.

Fires are most commonly caused by placing candles too close to combustible sources such as mattresses or beddings. Most fires caused by candles originate in the bedroom, often while people are sleeping. However, fires that were started in a living room or common area resulted in more deaths.

Here are some tips on how to use candles safely in the home:

Extinguish all candles before leaving a room or going to sleep.

Keep lit candles away from combustible items such as clothing, paper, bedding, window curtains and holiday decorations.

Use candle holders that are sturdy and large enough to collect dripping wax.

Store candles, matches and lighters out of the sight and reach of young children.

Place candles up high enough to prevent them from accidentally being knocked over by young children and pets.

For more information on fire prevention, please visit the Alabama Department of Public Health's Web site at www.adph.org/injuryprevention.

9/26/05