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PRESS RELEASE

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Kerrville Fire Department and the Red Cross Launch Campaign to Reduce Home Fire Deaths and Injuries

Kerrville, Texas (November 23, 2015) – The Kerrville Fire Department is teaming up with the American Red Cross for the Red Cross Home Fire Preparedness Campaign to reduce deaths and injuries from home fires by as much as 25 percent over the next five years. Residents who do not have working smoke alarms can contact the American Red Cross or the Kerrville Fire Department to participate in the campaign and have smoke alarms installed.

The campaign seeks to increase the use of smoke alarms in neighborhoods with higher numbers of home fires, and to encourage all Americans to practice their fire escape plans. “We know smoke alarms cut the risk of death from a fire in half and that’s why the Red Cross is working with fire departments and community groups in some of the most fire-affected neighborhoods around the country to install smoke alarms and teach people about home fire safety,” said Gail McGovern, president and CEO of the American Red Cross. “We’re asking every household to take two simple steps that can save lives: check their existing smoke alarms and practice fire drills at home.”

Many Americans are mistaken about their ability to survive a fire. The Red Cross fire preparedness campaign comes at a time when a new national survey shows many Americans have a false sense of security about surviving a fire. The survey, conducted for the Red Cross, shows that people mistakenly believe they have more time than they really do to escape a burning home. Fire experts agree that people may have as little as two minutes to escape a burning home before it's too late to get out. But most Americans (62 percent) mistakenly believe they have at least five minutes to escape, more than twice the amount they actually have. Nearly 18 percent erroneously believe they have ten minutes or more to get out.

When asked about their confidence levels in escaping a burning home, about 42 percent of those polled said they could get out in two minutes. Nearly seven in 10 parents (69 percent) believe their children would know what to do or how to escape with little help.

However, the poll showed few actions had been taken that would support the level of confidence of parents about their children's ability to escape a fire:

- Less than one in five families with children age 3-17 (18 percent) have actually practiced home fire drills.
- Less than half of parents (48 percent) have talked to their families about fire safety.
- Only one third of families with children (30 percent) have identified a safe place to meet outside their home.

Four Fire Safety Steps

There are several things families and individuals can do to increase their chances of surviving a fire:

- If someone doesn't have smoke alarms, install them. At a minimum, put one on every level of the home, inside bedrooms and outside sleeping areas. Local building codes vary and there may be additional requirements where someone lives.
- If someone does have alarms, test them today. If they don't work, replace them.
- Make sure that everyone in the family knows how to get out of every room, and how to get out of the home in less than two minutes.
- Practice that plan. What's the household's escape time?

The Red Cross responds to nearly 70,000 disasters each year in the United States – and the vast majority of those are home fires. Over the next several months, the Red Cross will team up with local fire departments and community groups to install smoke alarms in neighborhoods with high numbers of homes fires.

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