

# Maternal Child Death Review Annual Meeting

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## Division of Fire and Life Safety (DFLS)



Our Mission is to prevent the loss of life and property from fire and explosion

**Assistant State Fire Marshal  
Lloyd Nakano**

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# What DFSL does and what role DFSL plays in responding to fatalities or near fatalities?

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The DFSL Life Inspection Bureau is responsible for fire investigations throughout the State except in deferred jurisdictions.

Currently, we have two Deputy Fire Marshals (DFM) and one Supervisor in the Anchorage Office and one DFM in the Fairbanks Office. DFM's are sworn police officers.

DFSL has a one DFM on 24 hour standby to respond and conduct a fire investigation on fires that meet our criteria.

## DFSL Fire Investigation Criteria:

- Fires that result in a fatality or serious injuries
  - Fires that involve a substantial loss of property (\$500,000 or more)
  - Fires which appear to be intentionally caused as part of an insurance fraud or other criminal activity
  - Fires which will have a significant public impact
  - Fires which indicate trends or a serious consumer safety problem
  - Any fire that involves Department of Public Safety facilities or equipment
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# Who are DFSL biggest partners?

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## **Biggest Partners**

- Alaska State Troopers / Alaska Bureau of Investigation / Crime Lab
- Local Fire Departments
- Local Law Enforcement Agencies
- State Medical Examiner Office

## **DFSL has Deferred 11 Jurisdictions**

1. Municipality of Anchorage
  2. City of Fairbanks
  3. City of Juneau
  4. City of Kenai
  5. City of Ketchikan
  6. City of Kodiak
  7. City of Seward
  8. City of Sitka
  9. City of Soldotna
  10. University of Alaska Fairbanks
  11. City of Wasilla / Lakes
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# What DFLS sees as common risk factors across the families/individuals we serve?

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## **Risks**

- Alcohol or drug-use related fire fatalities increased by 60% in 2016. Impairment due to alcohol and drug-use can cause carelessness, poor judgment, and decreased motor skills leading to fires from unattended cooking, heating sources or the misuse of combustible material. Impairment contributes to the inability to recognize the danger, hear and respond to smoke alarms, escape from a burning dwelling, or assist others in reaching safety.
  - Smoke alarms failed to work or were not installed in 20% of the residences where fire fatalities occurred.
  - Nationally, children under 10 years old and seniors over 65 years old are identified to be at higher risk for fire related fatalities. Alaska had no fatalities under 10 years old and three over 65 years old which made up 17% of fire fatalities.
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# What are some of the biggest barriers DFLS experiences?

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## **Barriers**

- All 17 fire fatalities occurred in buildings where the division has no statutory authority for plan reviews and fire inspections.
- 14 of the 15 fatalities occurred in one or two-family dwellings and one occurred in a multi-residential structure. The division continues to have limited success of reducing unintentional fire fatalities to less than 13 annual fatalities due to the lack of residential building code and inspection authority, and little direct access to family residences.
- Two fire fatalities occurred in an automobile.

The division enjoys significant success in all other occupancy types where it is empowered to act.

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# What areas DFSL feels need addressed with the system or gaps that need filled to support prevention?

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## **System**

- Target regions are those areas of the state that experience a proportionately higher number of fires. Fire incident reports indicate the greatest number of fires consistently occur in western Alaska, central Alaska, and Anchorage. Therefore, the division has targeted these areas for increased educational and inspection efforts to reduce fires.
- It is suspected that many of the fires are due to drug and alcohol use, domestic violence, unattended cooking, and/or the presence of combustible items too close to heat-producing equipment

## **Gaps**

- DFSL has no code authority, no inspection authority, and little direct access to single-family residences where most of the fire fatalities occurred, public fire education is the one component that will continue to support a downward trend in this sector.
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What needs DFLS has from both the MCDR program and other providers/agencies in order for DFLS to be completely responsive and successful in prevention/responding to fatalities.

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- Collaboration with its partners, foundations, public service organizations and state agencies that advocate reducing intoxication and its negative effects on society.
  - Increase public education at schools, clubs, conferences, state fairs, smart phone applications, etc. to counter the loss of life.
  - Target western Alaska and central Alaska for increased educational and inspection efforts to reduce fires.
  - Ensure homes have working smoke detectors and clear escape routes in case of fire. Have a fire escape plan and discuss alternate escape routes as a family. Include the whole community (i.e. health aides, school programs) in fire safety education in rural or small communities.
  - Create or improve interventions for children who are known fire starters.
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# What you/DFLS have found to be beneficial/challenging from participating in the MCDR meetings?

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## **Beneficial**

- Common issues with other agencies
- Networking with other agencies

## **Challenging**

None

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# *Questions?*

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## **Contact Information**

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