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NEWS RELEASE

July 15, 2008 – For Immediate Release

Fire Department & Red Cross Awarded \$62,000 Grant

DUBUQUE, Iowa - The City of Dubuque Fire Department and the American Red Cross of the Tri-States have been awarded a \$62,105 Fire Prevention and Safety Grant from the Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Fire Administration Division. The grant will fund a three-part public education program designed to reduce fire deaths in Dubuque, particularly related to children 6 and under.

The program will target all kindergarten and first grade classes in Dubuque's 17 public and parochial elementary schools. In the first phase of the program, the Red Cross and fire department will create a homework packet consisting of several simple home safety questions including how many smoke detectors a child's home has, how often smoke detectors are tested, and whether or not the family has an escape plan. Students will be asked to complete these questionnaires at home as a family and return them to school. A home escape plan worksheet and directions on how to develop one will also be included in the packet. There will also be a place for a parent's signature, phone number, and a place to mark if they wish to be contacted about a free smoke detector program.

The second phase of the program involves an on-site visit to the schools. Within a couple of days of providing the teachers with the packets, an on-duty firefighter and a Red Cross representative will visit each school to give a 30-45 minute fire safety presentation consisting of a fire safety video (produced in partnership with local schools), reviewing the display of "Sparky's Hazard House" (a model house which simulates and allows interaction with home hazards such as fires, floods, tornadoes, winter risks, and senior citizen risks at home), trying on personal protective fire gear, or touring a fire truck. Following the presentation, the Red Cross and fire department staff will collect the homework questionnaires and free smoke detector forms.

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In the third phase of the program, Red Cross staff will develop and maintain a database containing information collected from the students. Dubuque firefighters will then train Red Cross volunteers on the proper installation of smoke detectors and how to perform a home fire safety inspection. The volunteers will then follow-up with families who expressed interest in the free smoke detectors and schedule a home inspection, which will include installation of the smoke detectors. The Red Cross is providing 10-year, lithium battery-powered smoke detectors and spare batteries. During the home safety inspections, smoke detectors will be installed where needed, existing smoke detectors would be inspected and batteries would be replaced in non-working smoke detectors. A home fire safety pamphlet designed specifically for high-risk residences will be left with the resident for future reference.

The grant application noted that, since 2001, 80 percent of all fatal fires in Dubuque involved residential occupancies without smoke detectors or with nonfunctioning smoke detectors. Since 2001, 40 percent of all fatal fires involved children age six and under. Eighty percent of all fire deaths and 100 percent of all children's fire deaths have occurred in neighborhoods containing some of Dubuque's oldest residences.

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