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FEMA & PR Fire Department Unite in Community Fire Safety Awareness Campaign

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SAN JUAN, PR -- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) officials, the Puerto Rico Fire Department and the National Commission on Children and Disasters are announcing a new joint public awareness campaign to help keep children and families safer from the threat of home fires.

As part of this effort, FEMA's U.S. Fire Administration released a new report on the risks fires pose to children. It reveals that there is a growing risk of death or serious injury in home fires and young children are most vulnerable. **Fifty two percent of all child fire deaths in 2007 involved children under the age of four, a slight increase from a 2004 study.**

"Fires are one of the most common emergencies, but are preventable. FEMA encourages local residents and families to follow simple steps to avoid fires, such as doing fire drills at home and have a family emergency plan to help save lives and property," said Alejandro De La Campa, FEMA's Region II Caribbean Area Division Director.

Furthermore, Puerto Rico residents should take notice that according to the latest report, boys are at higher-risk of dying from fires than girls; and between 2006 and 2008, smoke alarms were not present in at least 23 percent of residential fires.

"Curiosity in children can cause fires. This is why, as parents, we have the responsibility to look after our children's safety by keeping them away from fire risks. Do not allow them to play with candles, lighters, matches or pyrotechnic items. Also, keep them away from places with fire, such as grills, stoves, etc. Do not leave them by themselves or alone with other minors at home. Although it is FEMA and the PR Fire Department responsibility of warning about these risks and statistics regarding children's deaths, it is also the responsibility of every parent or guardian of minors to look after their safety and keep a home free of fire risks", said Carmen Rodríguez, Puerto Rico Fire Department Chief.

FEMA has launched online and social media tools at www.ready.gov/kidsfiresafety to give families key tips on fire safety and other resources. You can also join FEMA on Twitter by using the hashtag #kidsfiresafety or follow the agency on Facebook at www.facebook.com/fema.

FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.

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