November 6, 2017

Hagerstown, MD – The Hagerstown City Fire Marshal’s office has determined that the October 24, 2017 fire at 20 Snyder Avenue Hagerstown was determined to be an accidental cause. The 3:31am fire resulted in the death of Debra Kegarise (age 62) and her son Tyson Kegarise (age 41). The fire caused extensive damage to both sides of the duplex house and a vehicle in the driveway. Firefighters were able to quickly extinguish the fire which followed by a search of the building for the occupants; both were located on the second floor of the home along with two family dogs.

Hagerstown City Fire Marshals supported by the Hagerstown Police – Criminal Investigation Division, and the Office of the State Fire Marshal operated on the scene until approximately 4:00 pm to search for the cause. The investigation determined that the fire occurred as a result of an overloaded power strip within the first floor living room of the home. The overloaded power strip ignited nearby combustibles stacked around the power strip.

Two battery smoke alarms were recovered in the fire debris; both were older 9-volt smoke alarms. Based on the examination, neither smoke alarms appeared to be functional.

“This was a preventable fire and a tragedy that should never have happened” according to Doug DeHaven, Hagerstown Fire Marshal. “Working smoke alarms are the first line of defense to provide you time to get out in the event of a fire.” DeHaven advised that “Had they had working smoke alarms, the result may have been totally different.”

Hagerstown Fire Department staff returned to the neighborhood on October 24, 2017 as part of a neighborhood canvas to assure all homes in this community had working smoke alarms. The canvas resulted in several smoke alarms being repaired or new ones installed.

Most fire departments will install smoke alarms in local homes at no charge. Hagerstown residents who need assistance with checking their smoke alarms can contact the Hagerstown Fire Department at 301-790-2476. Smoke alarms should be installed on every level of your home, outside the sleeping area and in each bedroom. If your home uses fossil fuels, such as fuel oil or natural gas, you should also have CO alarms in your home.

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