



# Marion County Board of County Commissioners Marion County Fire Rescue

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[www.marioncountyfl.org/firerescue.htm](http://www.marioncountyfl.org/firerescue.htm)



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## **OFFICIAL REPORT FOR MULTIPLE FATALITIES FIRE RELEASED; REVEALS NEW INFORMATION**

Immediate Release

**MARION COUNTY, Fla.** (Feb. 1, 2010) – Marion County Fire Rescue and the Florida State Fire Marshal's Office have released official findings from a mobile home fire that took the lives of a mother and her four children on Nov. 21, 2009.

Officials with the Medical Examiner's office confirmed the identity of the victims as Tabetha Belanger, 25, Hunter Belanger, 6, Michael Belanger, 2, Nicholas Belanger, 4 and 2-month-old Aaron Chase; they also confirmed the cause of death as smoke inhalation. Investigators do not suspect foul play and will not open a criminal investigation.

The single-wide manufactured home measured approximately 732 square feet, with three bedrooms and one bathroom. The Florida State Fire Marshall's Office pinpointed the fire's origin to the bedroom closest to the living room. Officials deemed the cause of the fire as undetermined.

Upon arrival at the early morning fire, Marion County Fire Rescue firefighters found the 11300 NW 20th St. mobile home fully engulfed in flames with the roof collapsed. This incident accounts for Marion County's highest number of fatalities encountered in a single structure fire throughout the last two decades.

Smoke alarms can be a top tool for warning residents about potential fires. For citizens who can't afford smoke alarms, Marion County Fire Rescue will provide and install dual-mode smoke alarms free of charge through its "Get Alarmed" smoke alarm program. For more information, call 352-291-8000 or visit [www.marioncountyfl.org/firerescue.htm](http://www.marioncountyfl.org/firerescue.htm).

Marion County Fire Rescue firefighters encourage citizens to take the following safety precautions for their smoke alarms:

- Install smoke alarms in every sleeping area of the home, as well as in common areas such as living rooms and hallways.
- Replace smoke alarm batteries at least twice a year when the time changes or when the low battery alarm chirps.
- Never "borrow" a battery from your smoke alarms because you will likely forget to replace it.
- Test and inspect each smoke alarm at least once a month to make sure it's working properly.
- Create a fire escape plan and practice it at least twice a year, identifying two exits from every room and establishing a safe meeting place outside.

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