



CITY OF HARRISONBURG  
**FIRE**  
DEPARTMENT

101 NORTH MAIN STREET  
HARRISONBURG, VA 22802  
OFFICE (540) 432-7703

For Immediate Release – Feb. 15, 2022

Contact: Matthew Tobia, Fire Chief  
540.432.7703

## Determination made in Feb. 6 fatal fire; victim identified

HARRISONBURG, Va. – The cause of a fire that claimed the life of Ray Eugene Good, 73, of Harrisonburg, has been ruled accidental by the Fire Marshal's Office of the Harrisonburg Fire Department.

Harrisonburg firefighters were called to the 400 block of East Gay Street on Sunday, Feb. 6, at approximately 4 p.m. for a residential structure fire. A 9-1-1 caller reported smoke coming from the home and reported that someone might be inside. Firefighters from HFD and Rockingham County Fire Rescue arrived on the scene, confirmed a fire inside the home and initiated an aggressive rescue effort.

Mr. Good was quickly removed from the home and transported to Sentara Rockingham Memorial Hospital by the Harrisonburg Rescue Squad where he succumbed to his injuries. Preliminary information suggests that Mr. Good died of thermal burns and smoke inhalation. The home did not have any functioning smoke alarms or carbon monoxide alarms at the time of the fire.

After investigation, the Fire Marshal's Office has determined that the fire originated in the area of a portable kerosene space heater.

"We are deeply saddened that a member of our community died as a result of a fire," Chief Matthew Tobia said. "As we keep the Good family in our thoughts, we are committed to doing even more to prevent similar tragedies."

According to the National Fire Protection Association, heating is the second leading cause of home fires and home fire injuries, and the third leading cause of home fire deaths. Fire departments in the U.S. responded to an estimated average of 48,530 fires involving heating equipment per year in the time period 2014-2018, accounting for 14 percent of all reported home fires during this time. These fires resulted in annual losses of 500 civilian deaths, 1,350 civilian injuries, and \$1.1 billion in direct property damage.



(Above) Firefighters at the scene of a fatal fire on Feb. 6. The home did not have working smoke alarms or carbon monoxide alarms.

The Community Risk Reduction Division of the HFD wants everyone to remain safe during the winter heating season by offering these simple suggestions:

1. Keep anything that can burn at least three feet away from heating equipment, like the furnace, fireplace, wood stove or portable space heater.
2. Never use your oven to heat your home.
3. Remember to turn portable heaters off when leaving the room or going to bed.
4. Always use the right kind of fuel, specified by the manufacturer, for fuel burning space heaters.
5. Keep wood-burning stoves clean. Ashes should be cool before putting them in a metal container. Keep the container a safe distance away from your home.
6. Install, maintain, and test smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms.

Residents can contact the Harrisonburg Fire Department for a free home fire safety evaluation by calling (540) 432-7703 during business hours. HFD firefighters are available to install smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms for free to any resident in the city and can be contacted via phone, social media, or by visiting any city fire station. Residents can also learn more about fire safety at NFPA's [Winter Heating Safety Resources](#).

*The Harrisonburg Fire Department is an ISO-Class II All-Hazards agency providing essential emergency and non-emergency life safety services to the public who live, work and travel in Harrisonburg. More information about the Fire Department is available on-line at [www.harrisonburgva.gov/fire](http://www.harrisonburgva.gov/fire) or on Facebook©, Twitter© and Instagram©.*

*The City of Harrisonburg is centrally located in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. It is home to 51,000 people. More information about the City of Harrisonburg is online at [www.HarrisonburgVA.gov](http://www.HarrisonburgVA.gov).*



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