Remarks for the
Fire Prevention Week Press Conference
October 7, 2002

Good morning. Over the past two weeks, as Mississippi faced severe and damaging storms, we were able to make sure lives were saved and property was spared. We were able to do this because we were prepared, and knew what to look for and what to expect.

The same efforts we put into preparedness and prevention for weather events can also help us save lives and property from fire.

In Mississippi and around the nation, today marks the beginning of "Fire Prevention Week." The theme for this year is "Team Up for Fire Safety," and I want to emphasize the phrase "team up" in that theme.

It takes a concerted effort from all of us – from public officials, firefighters, and individual citizens – to help be aware of fire hazards and safety measures in our homes and places of business.

There are three basic lessons to this year's Fire Prevention Week: Installing and testing smoke alarms, practicing home escape plans, and hunting for home hazards.

Right now, Mississippi leads the nation in fire-related deaths. Those deaths are tragic, and there is so much we can do to change another of what I would call a "worst first."

There is a commitment to this change from the state level – my office, the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency, the Department of Insurance, the State Fire Marshall's office, and all of these firefighters here with us today share in that commitment.

I'm proud to announce that I am proclaiming the week of October 6 through October 12, 2002, as "Fire Prevention Week" in Mississippi. I want to call on the people of our great state to work together and participate in fire prevention activities at home, work and school.

We've shown that preparation saves lives. Let's keep up the good work and save even more.

I'd like to ask George Dale, Commissioner of Insurance, and Robert Latham, director of the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency, to make a few comments.

(George Dale speaks, followed by Robert Latham – then return to podium and open floor to questions)