Beat: News

Kentucky house inferno kills mother, 8 children

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USPA News - A mother and eight of her children were killed Thursday when a fire ignited by an electric heater tore through a home in western Kentucky, local and state officials said. The father and one of the children were the sole survivors of the inferno.

The Muhlenberg County Dispatch Center received a 911 call at 2:01 a.m. local time, reporting a fire at a residence in the small community of Depoy, about 5.6 kilometers (3.5 miles) west of Greenville. The first fire truck arrived on the scene within 13 minutes and found the house fully engulfed in flames, and it took firefighters nearly 3 hours to completely extinguish the blaze. The residence was home to the 11-member Watson family, but only two of them were able to escape from the burning structure. Both victims were airlifted to Vanderbilt Hospital in Nashville, where 36-year-old father Chad Watson was listed in critical but stable condition and 11-year-old daughter Kylie in stable condition. Chad confirmed to firefighters that the rest of his family was still inside the home. Once the blaze was contained, emergency responders, including Kentucky State Police officers and the investigators from the State Fire Marshall`s Office, were able to begin their investigation and recovery efforts. Nine bodies were found. The victims include the mother, Larae Watson, 36, and her children, Madison Watson, 15; Kaitlyn, 14: Morgan, 13; Emily, 9; Samuel, 8; Raegan Watson, 6; and twins Mark and Nathaniel, 4. All the deceased were removed from the scene and transported to the Medical Examiner`s Office in Madisonville for autopsy and identification purposes. Investigators with the Kentucky State Police and the State Fire Marshall`s Office have ruled the blaze accidental. According to officials, an electric baseboard heater located in one of the bedrooms caused nearby combustibles to ignite. Investigators were not immediately able to confirm if the home was equipped with working smoke detectors and fire alarms. "Today our community has experienced great tragedy and loss. Our hearts are deeply saddened and any words seem inadequate at this time," a spokesperson for the Muhlenberg County Sheriff`s Department said. "Our hearts go out to the Watson family and we extend our deepest condolences." Officials said the American Red Cross was on the scene of Thursday`s fire and may have initiatives for lodging when the survivors are released from hospital, but it was not immediately clear when they may be released. The Watsons also have other family in the Greenville area.

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