

## **Six die in Detroit house fire - Three escape in early-morning blaze that killed four children, two adults on east side**

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DETROIT -- Fire swept through an east side home early Sunday, killing four children and two adults who had been holding a wake for a cousin.

Killed by the blaze were **Eddie Dudley**, 54, his girlfriend, Carol Riley, 49, and her grandchildren Robert Baird, 9, Tavon Riley, 7, Kayla Childress, 4, and Kenya Childress, 3. They were spending the night because of the wake.

"I still can't believe it," said **Dudley's** 35-year-old daughter, Annette Nolen, as she stood Sunday outside her father's east side home clutching his driver's license. She gave his picture a kiss before she left the scene to go to a relative's house. "My dad would do anything for you. This is a real shock."

Riley's daughter, Latisha Riley, lost four children in the blaze, and another child, Destiny Riley, is hospitalized. Latisha Riley, 30, and her daughter, Destiny, 10, jumped from a second-story window. Destiny is listed in fair condition at Children's Hospital. Latisha was listed in serious condition at Detroit Receiving Hospital.

Firefighters rescued Tavon from the house, but he died later in Children's Hospital.

Sunday's deaths add to an already tragic year for fire-related deaths. According to the Detroit Fire Department, 13 people have died in fires in the city since Jan. 1.

Latisha and Destiny Riley escaped from the house by climbing to the attic, breaking out a window and jumping.

"The 10-year old knocked on my door saying help me, help me," said Linda Johnson, who lives two doors down from the **Dudley's** house and called 911. "She said she woke up after hearing her mom cough from the smoke."

Family members said a number of relatives were at the house late into the evening Saturday for the funeral of **Dudley's** cousin. Family from as far away as Cleveland and Georgia were attending the gathering and wake that lasted until about 4 a.m., said Coralynne Parham, a family friend.

The fire apparently started in the kitchen and was discovered about 4:40 a.m. as it spread through the home.

Firefighters battling flames searched the house and found the victims in the first-floor bedrooms. All were believed to have died in their sleep.

The home in the 12700 block of JoAnn had no smoke detectors, said Fire Department Lt. William Dunn. It also had bars on the windows and doors, but the bars didn't slow firefighters who were able to get through the front door, Dunn said. Still, the bars could have prevented people in the house from getting out, he said.

"People need to think about a way to get out and not think about keeping intruders from getting in," said Dunn, who added that smoke detectors might have saved family members' lives by awaking them. "If they had smoke detectors this tragedy may not have occurred."

Family members gathered in homes across Detroit's east side Sunday remembering those who died.

Leslie **Dudley** said her brother-in-law was a man who brought joy to anyone he met. She added that in addition to his job at DaimlerChrysler's Jefferson Avenue plant, he was an accomplished carpenter who built a swing set in his yard for the neighborhood children and added a new porch to his house this past summer.

"If you had a problem he would make you smile," said **Dudley**, 47, who was also deeply concerned about the health of those hospitalized.

The fire on Joann ranks as one of the worst in Detroit in recent years, including in 1998 when six children died in a house fire when flames rushed up a staircase, trapping them on the second floor of the home.

Caption: Darlene **Dudley** stands on the porch of her father's house on Detroit's east side. **Eddie Dudley** and four others died. Carol Riley and **Eddie Dudley**, along with four of her grandchildren, died in a fire at **Dudley's** home in Detroit. They were spending the night at **Dudley's** after holding a wake for a **Dudley's** cousin. L. Riley

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