

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HOMEWOOD, IL – March 31, 2010 – Last evening, Tuesday, March 30, 2010 before 9:00 PM, the Homewood Fire Department was dispatched to a report of a structure fire at a single-family residence at 17622 Lincoln Avenue in Homewood. First arriving fire crews found a house with visible smoke and flames, and were advised that at least one occupant remained inside the structure.

Firefighters initiated rescue and extinguishment operations, and, upon entering the structure, encountered heavy heat and fire conditions. Because of the extreme heat and the amount of fire burning inside the house, the sole occupant, 87-year old Wendell H. Elias, could not be reached and his body was located after entry could be made. The other occupant of the house, 89-year old Bertha A. Elias, had escaped and was transported to South Suburban Hospital with non-fire related injuries. She is in stable condition at this time.

During the rescue attempt, Homewood firefighter paramedics, Brian Carey (28 years old) and Karra Kopas (21-year old) were injured. They were taken by ambulance to South Suburban Hospital in Hazel Crest (IL) where they were treated. Firefighter Carey succumbed to his injuries and passed away while at the hospital. Firefighter Kopas suffered first and second degree burns and is in stable condition at the University of Chicago Burn Center.

Firefighter/Paramedic Carey joined the Homewood Fire Department as a part-time firefighter/paramedic on August 20, 2008, and was hired as a full-time firefighter/paramedic on December 13, 2009.

Firefighter/Paramedic Kopas joined the Homewood Fire Department as a part-time firefighter/paramedic on June 23, 2005.

Today, at a press conference at Homewood Village Hall, Homewood Fire Chief Grabowski stated that the fire is currently under investigation by the Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, and local MABAS Division 24 Fire Investigators, and no information is available at this time regarding the cause or origin of the fire.

The Homewood Fire Department was assisted by 24 additional fire departments, as well as by the Homewood Police Department and five neighboring police agencies.

Chief Grabowski concluded, *“This is the first casualty the Homewood Fire Department has ever experienced. We know that everyone is anxious to get answers about this situation, but, in the short term we may not have those answers. In the days ahead, we will give you information as we get it and confirm it as well. Please continue to be patient.”*

## **About the Village of Homewood**

The national rating agency of Standard and Poor's (S&P) has placed a rating of AA on Village of Homewood 2010 General Obligation (GO) Bonds. This represents an upgrade from AA- given to similar GO Bonds last issued by the Village of Homewood in 2006. A rating upgrade like this will reduce the amount of interest the Village of Homewood will be required to pay back during the life of these 2010 GO Bonds. S&P rates bonds from AAA to D. S&P defines AA ratings category as "*very strong capacity to meet financial commitments*".

The Village of Homewood is a vibrant community committed to maintaining high quality services within a framework of fiscal responsibility and fostering a successful business environment. Located just 25 miles south of Chicago's Loop, Homewood is a quiet suburban village with nationally acclaimed elementary and high school districts as well as parochial schools, an award-winning park district, and commuter-friendly downtown with Amtrak and Metra stops and convenient exit ramps off I-80 and I-294. In 2007, Forbes.com named Homewood one of the top most livable metro-area suburbs in the Midwest.