



Time Change: State Fire Marshal, Area Fire Departments Urge Residents to Change Batteries in Smoke Alarms

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ALTON/EDWARDSVILLE - The Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) and area fire departments remind residents to test and replace the batteries in their smoke alarms as daylight saving time begins this weekend and they turn their clocks forward one hour.

Edwardsville Deputy Fire Chief James Whiteford said there is no doubt that smoke detectors are probably the single-best fire protection item in a home.

“Since smoke detectors became pervasive, the U.S. death rate in fires has dropped significantly,” he said. “They can save lives. This is a great time to change them.”

Whiteford said the Edwardsville Fire Department still pushes the “change your clocks, change your smoke detector battery” concept.

The deputy fire chief said now with advances in batteries, more smoke detectors are good for 10 years with a 10-year battery life.

Whiteford said the 10-year smoke detectors have to be fully replaced at the end of the run and are equipped with batteries.

“If you have a 10-year smoke detector and the battery is dying, throw it away and get a new one,” he explained.

“The time change serves as a bi-annual reminder to test all smoke and CO alarms in your home,” says State Fire Marshal Matt Perez. “If you find an alarm that is not working or is expired, replace the alarm immediately. Review your fire-escape plan with your family and hold a drill to practice your plan.”

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) reports between 2012-2016, almost three out of every five home fire deaths in the U.S. resulted from fires in homes with no smoke alarms or non-working smoke alarms. The chances of dying in a home fire was reduced by 54 percent in homes where working smoke alarms are present. In fires in which the smoke alarms were present but did not operate, more than two of every five of the smoke alarms had missing or disconnected batteries.

Dead batteries accounted for 25 percent of smoke alarm failures. In 2019 in Illinois, 89 percent of pre-existing smoke alarms being replaced in homes that received the new 10-year sealed battery alarms through the “Be Alarmed!” program was found to be non-functional or were expired.

A 2017 Illinois law requires ten-year sealed smoke alarms be installed in all homes built before 1988 or that do not have hardwired smoke detectors by January 1, 2023.

“Participating fire departments in 2019 installed 4,948 10-year sealed smoke alarms in Illinois homes. There are now over 1,600 homes in Illinois protected and 3,700 residents educated on smoke alarm maintenance, home fire safety and home fire escape plans,” says state Fire Marshal Perez. “Replacing broken or expired alarms not only helps to create a fire-safe home, but working alarms provide early warning helping prevent loss of life due to fire.”

“Be Alarmed!” is a fire safety education and smoke alarm installation program administered cooperatively between the Illinois Fire Safety Alliance (IFSA) and the Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal (OSFM). “The “Be Alarmed!” program is designed to help residents in Illinois comply with the new law, but it’s really aimed at creating fire-safe communities.

For more information on the “Be Alarmed!” program visit <https://www.ifsa.org/programs/alarms>.