

State Fire Marshal Reminds Illinoisans to “Change Your Clock, Test and Inspect Your Smoke Alarms

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Springfield, Ill- The Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) reminds Illinoisans to test, check expiration dates and replace the batteries in their smoke alarms as daylight saving time ends this weekend and they turn their clocks back. In 2019, there were 91 residential fire deaths in Illinois, with most of those deaths occurring in homes without working smoke alarms.

“We recommend testing smoke alarms once a month, but the time change serves as a built-in reminder to test, inspect and replace nonoperational or expired smoke alarms, along with replacing batteries in smoke alarms. While you are changing the clocks in your homes, hit the test button on smoke alarms. Time is everything when it comes to escaping a home fire, and a working smoke alarm will increase your chances of escaping if a fire was to break out,” said Illinois State Fire Marshal Matt Perez.

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. 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% of smoke alarm failures. In Illinois, 79% of smoke alarms being replaced aren't working. By replacing alarms that have missing batteries or ones that are either expired or broken with new ten-year sealed detectors, this will help to reduce residential fire deaths across the state.

A 2017 Illinois law required 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.

“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,” says Fire Marshal Perez. “Modern construction uses more synthetic material which means home burn faster and hotter. These fires emit toxic gases, burn hotter and faster, decreasing the time people have to escape. This makes the importance of having working smoke alarms in the home!”

"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). This program provides ten-year, concealed battery smoke alarms to Illinois residents through their local fire departments and can aid with obtaining and installing these required alarms. Smoke alarms are required on every floor of the house and within 15 feet of every bedroom.

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