

Fire Prevention Week: Test smoke alarms now before cold weather brings increased threat of home fires

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ST. LOUIS— This Fire Prevention Week (October 3-9), the American Red Cross of Greater St. Louis urges you to test your smoke alarms before the threat of home fires increases with cold weather.

Locally, the Missouri and Arkansas Red Cross region responds to 34% more home fires in November-March than in warmer months. According to the National Fire Protection Association — which is sponsoring Fire Prevention Week with the theme, “Learn the Sounds of Fire Safety” — home fires are most common in cooler months when people spend more time inside, and cooking and heating equipment are the leading causes of these crises.

“Every day, people’s lives are devastated by home fires — a threat that’s increasing as winter approaches,” said Chris Harmon, Regional Disaster Officer. “Help keep your family safe now by testing your smoke alarms and practicing your two-minute fire escape drill.”

SMOKE ALARMS SAVE LIVES

Since October 2014, the Red Cross Home Fire Campaign with community partners has saved at least 30 lives in the Missouri and Arkansas Region, *which includes some counties in Kansas along the Missouri river and Illinois along the Mississippi river*. The campaign includes free smoke alarm installations and education for families about fire safety, helping them create escape plans and installing free smoke alarms in high-risk areas.

Across the Missouri and Arkansas Region, since October 2014, over 71,000 free alarms have been installed in over 32,000 households.

This breaks down to Missouri Red Cross volunteers and partners have installed over 57,000 alarms and helped make over 25,000 households safer since October 2014. *This includes some counties in Kansas along the Missouri river and Illinois along the Mississippi river that are included in our coverage area.*

Locally, during that same time frame, in the Greater St. Louis chapter area, Red Cross volunteers and partners have installed over 26,500 alarms and helped make nearly 11,500 households safer.

HOW TO PROTECT YOUR FAMILY

During Fire Prevention Week, test your smoke alarms and practice your two-minute home fire escape drill — the amount of time that experts say you may have to get out before it’s too late. Teach children what a smoke alarm sounds like and talk about fire safety and what to do in an emergency. Visit [redcross.org/fire](https://www.redcross.org/fire) for more information.

- **Place smoke alarms on each level of your home**, including inside and outside bedrooms and sleeping areas. Test alarms monthly and change the batteries at least once a year, if your model requires it.
- **Check the manufacturer's date of your smoke alarms**. If they're 10 years or older, they likely need to be replaced because components such as batteries can become less reliable. Follow your alarm's manufacturer instructions.
- **Include at least two ways to exit every room** in your home in your escape plan.
- **Select a meeting spot at a safe distance away from your home**, such as your neighbor's home or landmark like a specific tree in your front yard, where everyone knows to meet.
- **Tailor your escape plan to everyone's needs in your household**. If you are deaf or hard of hearing, install strobe light and bed-shaker alarms to help alert you to a fire. When practicing your plan, include any devices or people that can help you to get out safely.

If you cannot afford to purchase smoke alarms or are physically unable to install one, the Red Cross may be able to help. Contact your [local Red Cross](#) for help. Due to COVID-19 safety guidelines, smoke alarm installations are limited to where they're safe to do so.

To learn more about the campaign and how you can get involved, visit [redcross.org/HomeFires](https://www.redcross.org/Home/Fires).

About the American Red Cross:

The American Red Cross shelters, feeds and provides comfort to victims of disasters; supplies about 40% of the nation's blood; teaches skills that save lives; distributes international humanitarian aid; and supports veterans, military members and their families. The Red Cross is a nonprofit organization that depends on volunteers and the generosity of the American public to deliver its mission. For more information, please visit [redcross.org](https://www.redcross.org) or [CruzRojaAmericana.org](https://www.CruzRojaAmericana.org), or visit us on Twitter at [@RedCross](https://twitter.com/RedCross).