



Monterey County Fire Investigators Association

www.mcfia.org

Release Date: September 22, 2009

Public Service Announcement

Change Your Clock, Change Your Battery

As the time approaches to change our clocks on Sunday, November 1st, the Monterey County Fire Investigators Association want to remind residents to make another change that could save their lives - changing the batteries in their smoke alarms.

A 2008 survey found that 96% of U.S. households had at least one smoke alarm, yet in 2003-2006, no smoke alarms were present, or none operated in two out of five (41%) of the reported home fires.

Monterey County has witnessed tragic home fire deaths over the last seven years; seven residents have died in residential fires without working smoke alarms. Non-working smoke alarms rob residents of the protective benefits that home fire safety devices were designed to provide. The most commonly cited cause of non-working smoke alarms are worn or missing batteries.

Changing smoke alarm batteries at least once a year is one of the simplest, most effective ways to reduce these tragic deaths and injuries. In fact, working smoke alarms nearly cut in half the risk of dying in a home fire.

To save lives and prevent needless injuries, the Monterey County Fire Investigators Association urge all Monterey County residents to adopt a simple, lifesaving habit: **change your smoke alarm batteries when changing your clocks back to standard time each fall, this year on November 1, 2009**

The peak time for home fire fatalities is between 10:00 PM. and 6:00 AM when most families are sleeping. Children and senior citizens are most at risk, a working smoke alarm can give them the extra seconds they need to get out safely. Here are some statistics:

Fire Fatalities – Almost two-thirds of reported home fire deaths in 2003-2006 resulted from fires in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms.

Children - Approximately 1,000 children under the age of 20 die each year in home fires. Children under age five are at twice the risk of dying in a home fire. Eighty percent of fatal home fire victims who were children were killed in homes without working smoke alarms.

Seniors - Adults over age 75 are three times more likely to die in home fires than the rest of the population; those over 85 are 4.5 times more likely to die in a home fire. Many seniors are unable to escape quickly.

Low-Income Households - many low-income families are unable to afford batteries for their smoke alarms. These same households often rely on poorly installed, maintained or misused portable or area heating equipment— a main cause of fatal home fires.

- ***Working smoke alarms cut the risk of dying in a home fire nearly in half by sounding an early warning and providing critical extra seconds to escape.***

For more information on smoke detectors contact your local fire department or visit the website www.firesafety.gov