



Office of the State Fire Marshal

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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THE OFFICE OF THE ILLINOIS STATE FIRE MARSHAL ENCOURAGES RESIDENTS TO “CHANGE YOUR CLOCK, CHANGE YOUR BATTERY”

Bi-Annual Replacement of Smoke Alarm Batteries Helps Save Lives

CHICAGO –As spring quickly approaches, The Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal (OSFM) reminds people to change their smoke alarm batteries when they set their clocks forward on March 11th.

“There isn’t a better time to remind ourselves of the importance of having working smoke alarms in our homes at all times,” said State Fire Marshal Larry Matkaitis. “Something as simple as testing a smoke alarms’ efficiency and replacing outdated batteries offers some peace of mind for our families in the event of a fire.”

This year, Illinois residents will set their clocks one hour forward, from 1:00 a.m. to 2:00 a.m., on Sunday, March 11, 2012 CST. Before going to bed, residents should also install new batteries in their smoke alarms. In addition, OSFM suggests that Illinois residents should consider changing the batteries in other devices such as flashlights, radios, carbon monoxide detectors, and other essential devices.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, 40 percent of U.S. residential fire deaths happen in homes with no smoke alarms. Twenty three percent of fire fatalities occurred in residential occupancies that did not have a working smoke alarm; 80 percent of those numbers involved children.

The following information provides additional tips for smoke alarm installation and maintenance:

- According to the Illinois Smoke Detector Act, smoke alarms should be within 15 feet of all sleeping areas, with at least one on each floor.
- For residents that have hard-wired smoke alarms, battery operated smoke alarm backups should be considered in case of a power outage.

- For hearing impaired family members, consider installing an alarm that combines flashing lights, with sound.
- Mount smoke alarms high on walls or ceilings (remember, smoke rises). Ceiling mounted alarms should be installed at least four inches away from the nearest wall; wall-mounted alarms should be installed four to 12 inches away from the ceiling.
- Don't install smoke alarms near windows, doors, or ducts where drafts might interfere with their operation.
- Never paint smoke alarms. Paint, stickers, or other decorations could interfere with the alarm's ability to sound.

For more information about fire safety and prevention, please visit www.sfm.illinois.gov.