
CAL FIRE NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



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Now is the Time to Check Smoke Alarms

Three of every five home fire deaths resulted from fires in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms.

Sacramento – With Daylight Saving Time beginning on Sunday, March 11, 2018, CAL FIRE officials are reminding all Californians to ensure they have working smoke alarms in their homes. Smoke alarms save lives by providing the extra minutes needed to get out of your home safely.

“With the clocks springing forward, now is a great opportunity to spend a few minutes making sure your smoke alarms are less than ten years old, in good working condition and installed in the proper locations,” says Lynne Tolmachoff, Chief of Public Education. “Most people know how critical smoke alarms are, but they take them for granted and forget to maintain them. When smoke alarms fail to operate, it is usually because batteries are missing, disconnected, or the smoke alarm unit is dead.”

Some alarming statistics: did you know that smoke alarms sounded in more than half of the home fires reported? In fires in which the smoke alarms were present but did not operate, almost half of the smoke alarms had missing or disconnected batteries. No smoke alarms were present in almost two out of every five home fire deaths. Dead batteries caused one-quarter of the smoke alarm failures. With these facts, it is vital to have a working smoke alarm when you and your family have less than three minutes to get out of a burning home to stay safe, that is not a lot of time.

To help prevent a tragedy, we are highlighting the following life-saving strategies:

- Smoke alarms should be installed on every level of your home, in every sleeping area, and in the hallway leading to every sleeping area. Smoke alarms should be connected so when one sounds, they all sound.
- Inspect smoke alarms monthly, clean them yearly, and replace the entire unit every ten years.
- Replace the battery if the smoke alarm chirps. That is your warning sign that the battery is low.
- Protect your family by developing a home escape plan with two ways out of every room. Make sure to have an outside meeting place, and practice your escape during the day as well as the night.
- People who are hard-of-hearing or deaf can use special alarms. These alarms have strobe lights and bed shakers.
- An ionization smoke alarm is generally more responsive to flaming fires and a photoelectric smoke alarm is generally more responsive to smoldering fires. For the best protection, or where extra time is needed to awaken or assist others, both types of alarms, or combination ionization and photoelectric alarms are recommended.

You can do your part in preventing home fires by checking the dates on your smoke alarms and then testing them to make sure they work. To find out how old your smoke alarm is and its expiration date, simply look on the back of the alarm where the date of manufacture is marked. If the date is more than ten years old, it's time to change the entire smoke alarm unit. For more information, [click here](#).

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