

CITY OF MUSCATINE



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PAY ATTENTION TO HOME FIRE PREVENTION TIPS

Changing of clocks also good time to check on smoke, carbon monoxide detectors

MUSCATINE, Iowa – The Muscatine Fire Department reminds residents to think about home safety when they change their clocks this weekend.

"The bi-annual changing of time is the perfect opportunity to make sure that your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are up-to-date and in working order," Jerry Ewers, Muscatine Fire Chief, said. "This is a good time to test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, change the batteries in these devices, replace outdated detectors, and to remind family and friends to do the same in their homes."



All residents are encouraged to check their smoke and carbon monoxide detectors monthly and to change the batteries at least twice a year, or when the detector(s) make the "chirping" noise that indicates a low battery. The National Fire Prevention Agency (NFPA) also recommends that residences should have at least one smoke detector per floor and one in each sleeping area.

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Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are now required by state law. If you do not have both of these detectors ... purchase and install them.

Worn out or missing batteries are the most commonly cited reason for non-working smoke alarms, but changing smoke alarm batteries at least once a year, testing those alarms, and reminding others to do the same is the simplest and most effective way to reduce injury or death from fire.



The International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) also recommends replacing smoke alarms in homes every 10 years and those that actually speak warnings are more effective in saving lives than those alarms that just beep.

"Studies have shown that children, especially, will sleep through an alarm that beeps because it sounds a lot like an alarm clock," Mike Hartman, Assistant Fire Chief, said. "The alarms that actually speak to you have been shown to greatly increase a person's ability to escape a fire."

The Fire Department also recommends photoelectric alarms with a 10-year lithium battery and to mark the date of installation on the detectors.

"These detectors do not last forever," Hartman said. "It is important that you check the date on the detectors and replace those that are seven years old or more."

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The IAFC notes that modern homes contain a large quantity of synthetic furnishings which ignite and burn faster than natural materials such as wood and cotton. The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) conducted full scale fire tests and concluded that escape time in flaming fires can be as little as three minutes, as compared to 17 minutes in tests conducted in the 1970s.

Early smoke detection and alarm notification is needed so occupants can escape before conditions become untenable according to the IAFC position paper. Interconnecting smoke alarms allows for faster notification of occupants in areas remote from where initial ignition occurs in the home.

Because working smoke alarms are a critical element of home fire safety, the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) supports any and all efforts to reinforce the importance of working batteries. However, today's smoke alarms are not all designed the same, making battery messaging more nuanced.

Following is information to help make sure all smoke alarms have working batteries, accounting for the multiple types of smoke alarms on the market and their varying battery requirements:

- Smoke alarms with non-replaceable 10-year batteries are designed to remain effective for up to 10 years. If the alarm chirps, warning that the battery is low, replace the entire smoke alarm right away.
- Smoke alarms with any other type of battery need a new battery at least once a year. If that alarm chirps, warning the battery is low, replace the battery right away.
- When replacing a battery, follow the manufacturer's list of batteries on the back of the alarm or manufacturer's instructions. Manufacturer's instructions are specific to the batteries (brand and model) that must be used. The smoke alarm may not work properly if a different kind of battery is used.

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Carbon monoxide detectors are required in Iowa homes, apartment buildings, and new construction projects. They should be replaced every seven to eight years according to the IAFC.

"Basically, every residence that has a fuel-fired heater or appliance, fireplace, or attached garage will be required to have CO detectors," Hartman said.

Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless, and tasteless gas that is harmful when breathed because it displaces oxygen in the blood and deprives the heart, brain, and other vital organs of oxygen. Carbon monoxide poisoning (breathing in large amounts of CO) can cause serious tissue damage, loss of consciousness, or suffocation in minutes without any warning.

The NFPA provides additional information on carbon monoxide safety ([Carbon Monoxide Alarms](#)) and also provides a [Safety Tip Sheet \(PDF\)](#). The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) offers additional information about carbon monoxide and detector placement ([Carbon Monoxide Detector](#)).



The death rate per 1,000 reported home fires was more than twice as high in homes that did not have any working smoke alarms (12.3 deaths per 1,000 fires), either because no smoke alarm was present or an alarm was present but did not operate, as it was in homes with working smoke alarms (5.7 per 1,000 fires).

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Smoke & carbon monoxide alarms are life saving devices, and having working smoke & carbon monoxide alarms dramatically increases your chance of survival from a fire or carbon monoxide emergency.

Although it seems like a hassle, it's better to get into the practice of changing your smoke/carbon monoxide detector batteries when you change your clocks, than to wait until the telltale beeping of a dying battery at two in the morning. Many times, this beeping ends up in the removal of the battery or the detector all together, thus rendering the detector useless.

Fires & carbon monoxide emergencies are real and very scary. A working smoke detector performs its functions around the clock and alerts you and your loved ones to a fire or carbon monoxide emergency even while you are asleep.

When the alarm sounds you should "Get out & Stay Out", then call "911" and advise the MUSCOM dispatcher of the problem.

If you need assistance changing or testing your smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors, please contact the Muscatine Fire Department.

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