

CITY OF MUSCATINE



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TIME TO CHANGE THE CLOCKS AND CHANGE THE BATTERIES

Home Fire Safety begins with making sure smoke detectors are working properly

MUSCATINE, Iowa – The 48 U.S. states and all of Canada's provinces and territories will be "springing forward" this weekend to begin Daylight Savings Time (DST). The change in time, moving clocks ahead one hour at 2:00 a.m. on Sunday, March 9, 2025, is designed to create more hours of sunlight.

Hawaii and Arizona (except for the Navajo Nation that adheres to DST) do not change clocks and remain on Standard Time year-round.

Remembering to change clocks this weekend goes along with a home safety reminder to check the batteries on all smoke and carbon-monoxide detectors in the home, and to check the detectors to make sure they are in good working order.

It does not take long for a fire to become life-threatening. Sometimes it can take as little as two minutes, and a residence can become fully engulfed in flames in as little as five minutes.

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One of the best fire safety practices is to install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors at various locations in the home or in the business. But with that comes the responsibility to make sure these devices remain in proper working order.

Some facts about fires from ready.gov/home-fires.

- **Fire is FAST!** In less than 30 seconds a small flame can turn into a major fire. It only takes minutes for thick black smoke to fill a house or for it to be engulfed in flames.
- **Fire is HOT!** Heat is more threatening than flames. Room temperatures in a fire can be 100 degrees at floor level and rise to 600 degrees at eye level. Inhaling this super-hot air will scorch your lungs and melt clothes to your skin.
- **Fire is DARK!** Fire starts bright, but quickly produces black smoke and complete darkness.
- **Fire is DEADLY!** Smoke and toxic gases kill more people than flames do. Fire produces poisonous gases that make you disoriented and drowsy.

A working smoke alarm significantly increases your chances of surviving a deadly home fire. However, while a large percentage of homes have smoke alarms, many may not work because of dead or missing batteries. These nonworking alarms give residents a false sense of security. To check if an alarm is working push the test button. The alarm should emit a loud beeping sound by the time you count to 10. If not, it needs to be replaced immediately.

Smoke alarms are the single most important means of preventing fire-related deaths in the home. They warn people who would otherwise be overcome by toxic smoke gases in their sleep. Properly installed and maintained, they give residents those crucial minutes they need to escape.

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- Each year there are over 400,000 residential fires that cause nearly 4,000 deaths, over 18,000 injuries and \$4.7 billion in property losses.
- More than half of all fire fatalities occur in homes without a working smoke detector.
- In a fire, smoke spreads farther and faster than fire. More people die from breathing smoke than from burns.
- When people are asleep, deadly smoke fumes can cause them to sink into unconsciousness and then death, long before flames ever reach them.
- Replace batteries twice a year, unless you are using 10-year lithium batteries.
- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, including the basement.
- Replace the entire smoke alarm unit every 10 years or according to manufacturer's instructions.
- Never disable a smoke alarm while cooking – it can be a deadly mistake.
- Audible alarms are available for visually impaired people and smoke alarms with a vibrating pad or flashing light are available for the hearing impaired.
- Talking alarms are best in children's bedrooms as they respond quicker to voices than audible beeps.

If residents do not own a smoke alarm or need help changing batteries or checking alarms, they can contact the fire department to receive assistance. Residents can call the Muscatine Fire Department directly at 563-263-9233 with questions and to ask for more information.

CATEGORIES OF SMOKE ALARMS

Smoke alarms in the market fall under two basic categories: ionization and photoelectric. Ionization smoke alarms react quickly to open flame fires; photoelectric smoke alarms react to smoldering fires. A dual sensor smoke alarm combines the features from ionization and photoelectric smoke alarms.

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In addition, smoke alarms can be battery-operated or hard-wired. The difference between the two is that hard-wired smoke alarms are linked together so when one alarm goes off, all the alarms in the home activate.

Battery-operated smoke alarms can be powered by a 10-year non-replaceable lithium battery or by a disposable 9-volt battery.

When installing smoke alarms in the home, be sure to follow the instructions provided by the manufacturer. Smoke alarms should be installed on every floor of your home as well as on the inside and outside of every bedroom.

To maintain your smoke alarms, you must test the alarms monthly. For battery-operated smoke alarms with a disposable battery, replace the battery twice a year. For battery-operated smoke alarms with a lithium battery, since it is non-replaceable, replace the entire smoke alarm according to the manufacturer's instructions.

A trick to remember when it's time to change your smoke alarm batteries is to change them when you change your clocks (fall backward, spring forward) to make it a habit. For hard-wired smoke alarms, replace the backup battery at least once a year. A smoke alarm should be replaced every 10 years.

SLEEPING INDIVIDUALS DO NOT SMELL SMOKE

Research has shown that sleeping individuals do not smell smoke so the sounds emitting from a smoke detector are important to rousing sleeping individuals.

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

Pre-teenage children don't wake up to traditional high-frequency tone alarms according to research from the Center for Injury Research and Policy. Detectors that speak or vibrate when activated can help wake children or Individuals with visual or hearing impairments.

A variety of smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are available and finding the right one for your family situation is important, Hartman said.

"Also be sure to check the date on the smoke detector," Hartman said.

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.

The Muscatine Fire Department also recommends photoelectric alarms with a 10-year lithium battery and marking 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."