

Daylight Saving Time Begins

Change Your Clock, Change your Smoke Alarm Battery

Daylight Saving Time begins Sunday, March 12th. As you turn your clocks forward, Prince William County Department of Fire and Rescue Chief Kevin McGee would like to remind residents to change the battery in their smoke alarms. “When properly installed and maintained, working smoke alarms save lives and protect against injury and loss due to fire,” states Chief McGee. “They play a vital role in one’s home fire escape plan by providing an early warning allowing you and your loved ones time to escape a home fire. You double your chances of surviving a home fire with working smoke alarms compared to homes without working smoke alarms (www.pwcgov.org/SmokeAlarms).”



Annually, more than 2,500 people die in home fires; most are homes without a working smoke alarm. When a smoke alarm fails to operate, almost half of the smoke alarms had missing or disconnected batteries. If possible, install hard-wired smoke alarms and sprinklers; studies indicate homes installed with this equipment have resulted in a lower rate of fire deaths.

Safety Tips

Deadly house fires often occur late at night and early morning when individuals are sleeping. When a fire occurs, it produces poisonous gases that make you disoriented and drowsy. Contrary to belief, instead of being awakened by a fire, you may fall into a deeper sleep; therefore, it is imperative that smoke alarms be properly installed and maintained to protect against injury and the loss of life. To keep you and your family safe follow these lifesaving smoke alarm tips:

- Place a smoke alarm on every level of your home, including the basement, in every bedroom and outside each sleeping area.
- Test smoke alarms monthly by pushing the test button. If you cannot reach the button easily, use a broom handle.
- When a smoke alarm sounds, get outside and stay outside.
- **DO NOT** remove the batteries from your smoke alarms to put in other appliances.
- Replace all smoke alarms in your home every 10 years or sooner if they don’t respond when testing:
 - For smoke alarms with a non-replaceable battery, replace the entire smoke alarm if it begins chirping.
 - For smoke alarms with regular batteries, replace the batteries once a year when you change your clocks, fall back, spring forward, or before if the battery starts to chirp.
- Smoke alarms should be interconnected, so when one alarm sounds, they all do.
- Keep smoke alarms clean. Vacuum or dust your smoke alarms according to manufacturer’s directions to keep them working properly.
- Teach children what the smoke alarm sounds like and what to do in the event it sounds.

Smoke alarms can often sound while cooking or taking a shower that emits large amounts of steam. If a smoke alarm sounds during these types of activities, **DO NOT** remove or disable the battery; creating a minor fix can lead to a deadly mistake. Instead you should:

- Open a window or door and press the “hush” button,
- Wave a towel at the alarm to clear the air, or
- Move the entire alarm several feet away from the location.

Smoke Alarms for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

There are over 48 million deaf or hard of hearing Americans who are unable to rely on traditional audible smoke alarms to alert them of fire; however, there are special designed smoke alarms for the hard of hearing. There are vibrating alarms or visual alarms equipped with flashing strobe lights. It is vital that this audience is aware of the availability of these types of smoke alarm devices as well as the importance of a proper escape plan.

For more information on smoke alarms for the deaf and hard of hearing, contact the Hearing and Loss Association of America at 301-657-2248 or visit <http://www.hearingloss.org/>.

Additional Safety Tips

Prince William County Department of Fire & Rescue (www.pwcgov.org/fire) in conjunction with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) advises families to develop and practice, regularly, a [home fire escape plan](#) and be sure everyone in your household knows what to do and where to go in the event there is a fire.

**Note: When changing the batteries in your smoke alarm, it's also important to change the batteries in your NOAA All Hazard/Weather Radio. Hazardous weather conditions can develop at any time – Be Prepared! Preparation is your best defense!*

For more information on smoke alarm safety and how to prevent home fires, visit the National Fire Protection Association www.nfpa.org and Ready.gov www.ready.gov.



[All Hazards NOAA
Weather Radios/](#)



Smoke Alarm/Detector