
CAL FIRE NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



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Properly Maintained Smoke Alarms Can Save a Life CAL FIRE Reminds Californians to Check Their Smoke Alarms Monthly

Sacramento – On March 12, Californians will be turning their clocks forward, and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) is taking the opportunity to remind everyone to check their smoke alarms and replace the batteries in older alarms. While new smoke alarms now come with 10-year batteries, CAL FIRE recommends that Californians test their smoke alarm monthly to ensure they are in good working order. Replace all smoke alarms after 10 years.

A study done by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) in 2021 found that almost three out of five home fire deaths were caused by fires in properties with no smoke alarms or smoke alarms that failed to operate. To help reduce the number of home fire fatalities, CAL FIRE is reminding all Californians to make sure they have working smoke alarms in their homes.

“Smoke alarms give Californians an early warning when there is a fire so everyone can quickly get outside,” said Acting State Fire Marshal Daniel Berlant, “Smoke alarms simply save lives, but they must be tested monthly to ensure they are in good working order.”

State fire officials recommend Californians pull together everyone in their household and make a home fire escape plan. Walk through the home and inspect all possible exits and escape routes. Households with children should consider drawing a floor plan of the home, marking two ways out of each room, including windows and doors. Also, mark the location of each smoke alarm. Choose an outside meeting place (i.e., neighbor's house, a light post, mailbox, or stop sign) a safe distance in front of your home where everyone can meet after they've escaped. If there are infants, older adults, or family members with mobility limitations, make sure that someone is assigned to assist them in the fire drill and in the event of an emergency. Tell guests or visitors to your home about your family's fire escape plan.

A closed door may slow the spread of smoke, heat, and fire. Install smoke alarms in every sleeping room and outside each separate sleeping area, on every level of the home, and even in the basement. Smoke alarms should be interconnected if possible so when one sounds, they all sound. Once you're out, stay out! Under no circumstances should anyone ever go back into a burning building.

The risk of dying in reported home structure fires is 55 percent lower in homes with working smoke alarms than in homes with no alarms or none that worked. A working smoke alarm is a small price to pay to help keep you and your family safe.

For more information on smoke alarms, please visit the CAL FIRE's website at www.fire.ca.gov.

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