

City of Bristol Tennessee

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Local Fire Marshal Urges Safety

Change your clocks and smoke alarm batteries this weekend

With the loss of two civilian lives to residential structure fires in the last twelve months, the local Fire Marshal's Office is encouraging all Bristolians to change their smoke alarm batteries when they change their clocks Saturday night for daylight savings time.

"Smoke alarms should have their batteries replaced regularly and should be tested monthly to ensure they're providing the proper protection," Bristol Fire Marshal /Asst. Chief Jack Spurgeon says.

The Fire Marshal's Office is currently investigating the last fire death that occurred on February 6 of this year. In the last twelve months Bristol Tennessee has suffered two losses of life and two fire related injuries due to residential fires. Both of these fires occurred at night or early morning while the victims were sleeping. The smoke and toxic gases generated by a fire can cause people to sleep more deeply, narrowing the chances of surviving a fire. A working smoke alarm can double the chances of survival by increasing the amount of time a person has to escape a fire in their home.

In 2012 over \$548,000 of fire losses occurred in Bristol, Tennessee while over \$25 million of property was potentially saved due to the rapid response of the fire department.

In the United States, roughly two-thirds of home fire deaths happen in homes with no working smoke alarms. It is critical to install smoke alarms and replace batteries regularly and twice a year is recommended. This reduces the chance of alarms chirping to indicate low batteries. All too often, a battery is removed and not replaced, putting a home's occupants at risk. There's no way to predict when a fire will occur; so, even one night without an operational smoke alarm can be dangerous.

Here are some other helpful hints on the importance of smoke alarms:

- Smoke alarms should be installed in every room where an occupant sleeps, outside every sleeping area and on each level of the home, including the basement. Make sure everyone can hear the alarm and knows what it sounds like.
- Dust or vacuum your smoke alarms whenever the battery is changed. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for cleaning. The instructions are included in the package or can be found on the Internet.
- Devise a fire escape plan with two ways out of every room, and be sure to teach it to all who live in the home, including children.
- When a smoke alarm sounds, get out of the home immediately and go to your pre-planned meeting place.

- Smoke alarms with non-replaceable (long-life) 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.
- Test alarms once a month using the test button. Replace the entire alarm if it's more than 10 years old or doesn't work properly when tested.

The Bristol Fire Marshal's Office is committed to preventing deaths from home fires and lessening property losses. An element of completing this mission is the department's smoke alarm program which is geared toward equipping high-risk homes across the city with smoke alarms. You can find out more about this important program by stopping by the Central Fire Station at 211 Bluff City Highway.

For more information on making your home fire-safe, contact Fire Marshal Jack Spurgeon at 423-989-5701 or email jspurgeon@bristoltn.org

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