

Sycamore Fire Department Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Change your clocks and..... Change your batteries!

On early Sunday morning, November 6, 2016 at 2:00:00 AM, Illinoisans will be turning their clocks back one hour in observance of the return to Standard Time. When they do, the Sycamore Fire Department is reminding residents to replace the batteries in all of their smoke detectors. Firefighters are also urging residents to replace the batteries in their carbon monoxide (CO) detectors at the same time.

NFPA 72, *National Fire Alarm Code*®, requires smoke alarms be replaced at least every 10 years, but because the public is generally unaware of this requirement, many homes have smoke alarms past their expiration date, putting people at increased risk. To find out how old your smoke alarm is and its expiration date, simply look on the back of the alarm where the date of manufacture is marked. The smoke alarm should be replaced 10 years from that date (*not* the date of purchase).

Batteries in smoke and CO detectors should be changed at least twice a year, even if the detectors are hardwired into the electrical system. In the case of hardwired detectors, the battery will keep the detector functioning in the event of a power failure. A good time to remember to check your smoke and CO detectors and change the batteries is when you change your clocks twice a year as daylight saving time begins and ends. In addition to changing the batteries twice a year, you should test your smoke and CO detectors every month by simply holding down the test button. Because dust and cobwebs can impair the sensitivity of a smoke or CO detector, vacuum your detectors at least once a year. Also, never paint over a smoke or CO detector. In order to maintain the highest level of protection, the Sycamore Fire Department recommends that your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors should be replaced every 10 years.

Remember, almost every day a smoke detector saves somebody's life. Roughly two-thirds of home fire deaths occurred in homes without working smoke detectors. Since most fatal fires occur at night, it's essential that every home have working smoke detectors to provide an early warning. Working smoke detectors increase the chance of surviving a home fire by 50 percent.

If the smoke detector goes off, crawl low to the ground under the smoke and exit your home quickly. Don't try to take anything with you, just get out. Once safely outside, go to your family meeting place to ensure that everyone got out safely. Once you're out, **STAY OUT!** Make sure to prepare and practice an escape plan including a family meeting place. Just as schools practice fire drills, families should also practice what to do if their smoke detectors go off.

If your CO detector activates and you feel ill, leave the house and call 911. If you do not feel ill, push your detector's reset button. If the alarm goes off again after a few minutes, open the windows, leave the house, and call 911. Because CO is odorless, colorless, and otherwise undetectable to the human senses, people may not know that they are being exposed. The initial symptoms of low to moderate CO poisoning are similar to the flu (but without the fever). They include:

- Headache
- Fatigue
- Shortness of breath
- Nausea
- Dizziness

Smoke detectors should be installed in every bedroom, in the hallways leading to the bedrooms, and on each level of your home including the basement. Smoke detectors should be mounted on

the ceiling at least 4” from the wall; wall mounts should be 4-12” down from the ceiling. Do not install near draft areas (windows, vents).

If your CO detector activates and you feel ill, leave the house and call 911. If you do not feel ill, push your detector's reset button. If the alarm goes off again after a few minutes, open the windows, leave the house, and call 911. Since 2007 homeowners, landlords and building owners in Illinois are required to install carbon monoxide (CO) detectors in any occupancies that have rooms used sleeping. This Illinois law requires the owner of the building to install carbon monoxide detectors within 15 feet of all rooms used for sleeping.

The minimal effort required to change a few batteries could mean the difference between life and death. The Sycamore Fire Department has long advocated the ‘Change Your Clock, Change Your Battery’ campaign, as a smoke or CO detector is one of the cheapest and most effective ways homeowners can provide year round fire and carbon monoxide protection for themselves and their families. Every year lives are lost in homes without smoke or CO detectors or those homes with a non-functioning smoke or CO detector. In a study conducted by the National Fire Prevention Association (NFPA), nearly 96% of households report having at least one smoke detector. Yet the US Fire Administration reports residential fires make up nearly 83% of all civilian fire deaths. The culprit is generally a disconnected or dead battery.

Smoke carbon monoxide detectors unquestionably help save lives, but they are useless without working batteries inside of them. Just a few minutes twice a year to change that battery can truly mean the difference between life and death. Save a life, when you change your clocks, change your smoke and carbon monoxide detector batteries.

For more information on this topic, please contact Ian Wheeler, Sycamore Fire Department Fire Prevention Coordinator at 815-895-4514.