

It's time to Spring Forward

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When March rolls around, the word “spring” is heard more frequently. In March we have Spring break, Spring Training, and we Spring Forward. Since 2007 we have sprung forward and moved our clocks up one hour on the second Sunday in March.

When you change your clock on March 14, remember to change the batteries on your smoke alarm. Having a functioning smoke alarm in your house can triple your chances of surviving a fire.

Ninety-two percent of American homes have smoke alarms but many of the alarms are inoperable because of worn or missing batteries. Nationally, inoperable smoke alarms contribute to many of the estimated 3,600 deaths and 19,000 injuries caused each year by home fires. An estimated 890 lives could be saved each year if all homes had working smoke alarms.

The following tips will ensure that your alarm is functioning properly:

- Clean out your alarm regularly. A clean, properly installed smoke detector can give you valuable minutes of early warning in an emergency.
- Test your alarm once a month. To test your alarm, push the test button on the alarm. The best way to do this is with a broom or mop handle.
- Never disconnect your smoke detector or “borrow” your batteries from something else. If your detector “chirps” it’s time to replace the batteries.
- Look for the UL logo or mark on your smoke alarm. This mark tells you that the smoke alarm has been tested and meets nationally recognized safety requirements.
- Identify how many smoke alarms you have in your residence. It is recommended to have one alarm on each level of your home, making sure that there is an alarm outside every separate sleeping area.
- Smoke alarms do not last forever. Replace your alarm once every 10 years.
- If you painted over your smoke detector, get a new one. Paint, stickers, or other decorations could keep your alarm from functioning properly.

After you have inspected your smoke alarms and everything is in working order, don’t forget to go over your escape plan with your family. Sound the alarm and explain to your children what they should do when they hear it go off. Some studies have shown that some children may not awaken to the sound of the smoke alarm.

Miami-Dade Fire Rescue has a residential smoke detector program. The goal of this program is to ensure that every household in Miami-Dade County. Elderly residents and low-income households with children qualify for a free smoke

alarm and instillation from Miami-Dade Fire Rescue. For more information on smoke alarm instillation call the Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Community Relations Bureau at 786-331-4920.

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