

Wanted: Your Help Preventing Home Fire Deaths

Since the beginning of February, more than 60 people have died in home fires in 17 states. The International Association of Fire Chiefs is asking the media and others to inform people about how to protect themselves and their families from tragedy.

Whether you are in the fire service, a teacher, social worker or member of a community agency, or simply a concerned individual, you can help. Pass along these life-saving messages:

1. Check your smoke alarm monthly to make sure it is working. About 70% of home fire deaths occur in homes with no smoke alarm or no working smoke alarm.
2. Replace smoke alarm batteries at least once a year or when the alarm begins to chirp, which means the battery is low. Consider installing alarms with 10-year batteries. Smoke alarms should be replaced every 10 years.
3. Have an escape plan and a meeting place for your entire family. PRACTICE it.
4. When the alarm sounds, get out and STAY out. Many people who die in fires do so because they went back inside. Let firefighters know if pets are trapped inside your home.
5. If someone in your family has special needs, you can get information on 'Fire safety for people with disabilities' at www.nfpa.org
6. Don't use a stove to heat your home. If you use supplemental heating devices such as kerosene heaters, be sure you know how to use and maintain them safely. Don't leave them unattended.
7. Don't leave candles unattended, and keep them out of reach of children.