



AN URGENT WARNING FROM THE STATE FIRE ADMINISTRATOR : SMOKE ALARMS

There have been multiple fatal fires across New York State recently, and unfortunately they share a thread all too common-- the evidence of nonworking smoke alarms.

The Office of Fire Prevention and Control urges all New Yorkers to clean and test their smoke alarms regularly. Working smoke alarms can dramatically increase a person's chance of surviving a fire. Smoke alarms provide an early warning to a fire, allowing occupants vital minutes to escape to safety.

When purchasing a smoke alarm, look for smoke alarms with a loud siren or horn, a hush feature, a ten-year battery, a malfunction signal and a UL listing. "Most hardware stores, home stores and other retail outlets have excellent smoke alarms at reasonable prices," says State Fire Administrator Floyd A. Madison.

Most fire deaths are caused by smoke, not flames. The majority of fire deaths and injuries occur at night while victims are asleep. The earlier you are alerted to a fire, the more likely it is that you will get out in time. Smoke alarms will not prevent fires, but they will increase your chances of getting out alive. "The key is to make sure your smoke alarms are working," said Madison. "Many people forget that smoke alarms need to be maintained in order to be in proper working condition."

State Fire Administrator Madison encourages all New Yorkers to take an active role in fire prevention and offers the following fire safety tips:

- Place smoke alarms on every level of your home, outside each sleeping area and in every bedroom.
- Test smoke alarms monthly.
- Vacuum alarms monthly to remove dust and cobwebs.
- Replace old alarms. Smoke alarms ten years old and older need to be replaced.
- Alarms should never be disconnected and batteries should never be removed for other uses.

Research by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) indicates that while 94% of American homes have at least one smoke alarm, more than 1/3 are inoperable because of dead or missing batteries. Nearly 1/2 of our nation's fire deaths occur in the 6% of homes with no smoke alarms at all. Far too many fire departments in New York State report they continue to respond to calls in homes and apartments each year where there is no working smoke alarm present.

The Office of Fire Prevention and Control wants to reaffirm the value that working smoke alarms have in protecting people from the tragedy of a home fire death and emphasize the need to continue planning and practicing home fire escape plans.

In light of these latest tragic fires, State Fire Administrator Madison also urges all fire departments to redouble their efforts related to raising the public consciousness of importance of working smoke alarms. "Whether it is through smoke detector installation programs, neighborhood canvass, signs in front of the station or local public awareness announcements on the radio and TV, the fire service must use every tool at its disposal to help ensure the public clearly understands this vital message..." Madison says. "...smoke alarms cannot save you if they aren't working."



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