



# Monterey County Fire Investigators Association

[www.mcfia.org](http://www.mcfia.org)

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## Public Service Announcement

### Change Your Clock, Change Your Battery

As the time approaches to change our clocks on Sunday, November 1<sup>st</sup>, the Monterey County Fire Investigators Association want to remind residents to make another change that could save their lives - changing the batteries in their smoke alarms.

A 2008 survey found that 96% of U.S. households had at least one smoke alarm, yet in 2003-2006, no smoke alarms were present, or none operated in two out of five (41%) of the reported home fires.

Monterey County has witnessed tragic home fire deaths over the last seven years; seven residents have died in residential fires without working smoke alarms. Non-working smoke alarms rob residents of the protective benefits that home fire safety devices were designed to provide. The most commonly cited cause of non-working smoke alarms are worn or missing batteries.

Changing smoke alarm batteries at least once a year is one of the simplest, most effective ways to reduce these tragic deaths and injuries. In fact, working smoke alarms nearly cut in half the risk of dying in a home fire.

To save lives and prevent needless injuries, the Monterey County Fire Investigators Association urge all Monterey County residents to adopt a simple, lifesaving habit: **change your smoke alarm batteries when changing your clocks back to standard time each fall, this year on November 1, 2009**

The peak time for home fire fatalities is between 10:00 PM. and 6:00 AM when most families are sleeping. Children and senior citizens are most at risk, a working smoke alarm can give them the extra seconds they need to get out safely. Here are some statistics:

Fire Fatalities – Almost two-thirds of reported home fire deaths in 2003-2006 resulted from fires in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms.

Children - Approximately 1,000 children under the age of 20 die each year in home fires. Children under age five are at twice the risk of dying in a home fire. Eighty percent of fatal home fire victims who were children were killed in homes without working smoke alarms.

Seniors - Adults over age 75 are three times more likely to die in home fires than the rest of the population; those over 85 are 4.5 times more likely to die in a home fire. Many seniors are unable to escape quickly.

Low-Income Households - many low-income families are unable to afford batteries for their smoke alarms. These same households often rely on poorly installed, maintained or misused portable or area heating equipment— a main cause of fatal home fires.

- ***Working smoke alarms cut the risk of dying in a home fire nearly in half by sounding an early warning and providing critical extra seconds to escape.***

For more information on smoke detectors contact your local fire department or visit the website [www.firesafety.gov](http://www.firesafety.gov)