

# October is Fire Safety Month, Change Your Clock Change Your Battery.

Chief Stephen Schewe

As the time change approaches on Sunday, October 30<sup>th</sup>, The Fort Wright Fire Department wants to remind residents to make another change that could save their lives-changing the batteries in their smoke alarms.

Communities nationwide witness tragic home fire deaths each year. An average of three children per day die in home fires and 80 percent of those occur in homes without working smoke alarms. Non-working smoke alarms rob residents of the protective benefits home fire safety devices were designed to provide. The most commonly cited cause of non-working smoke alarms: 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. Additionally, the International Association of Fire Chiefs recommends replacing your smoke alarm every ten years.

To save lives and prevent needless injuries in Fort Wright, the Fort Wright Fire Department has joined forces with Energizer and the International Association of Fire Chiefs for the 18<sup>th</sup> year of the Change Your Clock Change Your Battery campaign. The program urges all Americans to adopt a simple, lifesaving habit: changing smoke alarm batteries when changing clocks back to standard time each fall, this year on October 30<sup>th</sup>.

“The peak time for home fire fatalities is between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. when most families are sleeping,” says Chief Stephen Schewe. “Smoke alarm maintenance is a simple, effective way to reduce home fire deaths. Children and senior citizens are most at risk, and a working smoke alarm can give them the extra seconds they need to get out safely”.

In addition, Chief Schewe recommends residents use the “extra” hour they save from the time change to test smoke alarms by pushing the test button, planning “two ways out” and practicing escape routes with the entire family.

Tragically, fire can kill selectively. Those most at risk include:

**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 a home fire 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.

For more information, or help with testing or changing smoke alarm batteries please call Fort Wright Fire Department at 859-331-2600