

As Georgians prepare to “spring forward” and “fall back” each year, the Gwinnett County Fire and Emergency Services reminds you to change your batteries in your smoke alarm when you change your clock! As a rule, your alarms should be checked at least monthly, and the batteries changed out twice a year.

Every year nearly 3,000 people die in house fires. Two-thousand of the fire fatalities had no smoke alarms or the smoke alarm was not operational in the home. Having an operational smoke alarm in your home should be your number one priority when it comes to protecting your family from an unforeseen tragedy. Making sure the smoke alarm has a fully charged battery is the best way to insure that everyone has a chance to make it out of a burning structure in the event a disaster strikes.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), working smoke alarms increase the chance of surviving a home fire by 50 percent. The association also notes in more than half of the reported home fires in which the smoke alarms were present, they did not operate even though the fire was large enough; batteries were missing or disconnected. Nuisance alarms were the leading reason for disconnected alarms.

Part of your regular maintenance is to keep the alarm dust free and test it as part of your home safety plan. Also, at least one smoke alarm should be placed on each level of the house, especially outside of bedrooms and at the top of staircase landings. These areas give you the earliest alert about a possible fire in your home. No smoke alarm should be used if it is 10 years or older. Smoke alarms have manufacture dates printed on them, so replace the unit based on the manufacturer's recommendation.

If it is necessary to replace the alarm there are primarily two different types. The ionization types are more responsive to flaming fires, such as a grease fire on the stove. The other type is photoelectric, which is generally more responsive to fires that begin after a long period of smoldering, such as a fire started by a cigarette discarded in a trash can or dropped on the cushion of a couch. According to NFPA, the best protection is to use both types of smoke alarm technologies in the home.

Take a few extra minutes to protect your family when you change your clocks throughout the year and change those smoke and carbon monoxide alarm batteries.

