

NFPA offers smoke alarm advice during Fire Prevention Week, Oct. 3-9, to maximize families' safety from fire.

Smoke alarms save lives, and can cut the risk of dying in a fire in half. However, smoke alarms must be installed, maintained and working properly to do so.

That's according to the nonprofit National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), which is promoting "Smoke Alarms: A sound you can live with!" as the theme for this year's Fire Prevention Week campaign, Oct. 3-9, 2010.

NFPA has been the official sponsor of Fire Prevention Week for 88 years.

"By now, most families know that smoke alarms are a vitally important element of home fire safety, and have at least one," says Lorraine Carli, NFPA's vice president of communication. "Unfortunately, far fewer people are familiar with some of the newer recommendations for smoke alarms. Without incorporating these updated measures, many families may not be as well protected from fire as they think."

"Smoke alarms: A sound you can live with!" works to better educate the public about recommendations for smoke alarms, and help maximize families' safety from home fires, as follows:

Installation

- At least one smoke alarm should be located on every level of the home, including the basement, as well as in every sleeping room and outside each sleeping area.

- NFPA strongly recommends either installing combination smoke alarms, or both ionization and photoelectric alarms, in the home.

An ionization alarm is typically more responsive to a flaming fire, such as a pan fire. A photoelectric alarm is typically more responsive to a smoldering fire, as might occur where a lighted cigarette is dropped on a sofa.

Combination smoke alarms have ionization and photoelectric capabilities.

- Whatever type of smoke alarms you choose, they should carry the label of a recognized testing laboratory.
- Interconnected smoke alarms offer the best protection; when one sounds, they all do. This is particularly important in larger or multi-story homes, where the sound from distant smoke alarms may be reduced to the point that it may not be loud enough to provide proper warning, especially for sleeping individuals.
- A licensed electrician can install either hard-wired multiple-station alarms, or wireless alarms, which manufacturers have more recently begun producing. An electrician can also replace existing hard-wired smoke alarms with wireless interconnection capabilities.

Maintenance and Testing

- Test smoke alarms at least once a month using the test button, and make sure everyone in your home knows their sound.
- If an alarm “chirps,” warning the battery is low, replace the battery right away.

- Replace all smoke alarms, including alarms that use 10-year batteries and hard-wired alarms, when they're 10 years old (or sooner) if they do not respond properly when tested.

Fire departments throughout the country will be hosting activities during Fire Prevention Week to promote the "Smoke Alarms: A sound you can live with!" campaign locally.

These educational, family-oriented activities can help everyone learn more about the power of smoke alarms, newer options for installing and maintaining them properly, and ultimately, how to better protect themselves and loved ones from fire.

To find out more about Fire Prevention Week, smoke alarms and this year's campaign, "Smoke Alarms: A sound you can live with!", visit NFPA's website at <http://www.firepreventionweek.org>.