



Check Your Smoke Detector: and Practice Your Escape Plan



A properly installed and operating smoke detector is the single most important fire prevention device that a person can have in their home. The early warning of a fire inside a residence is critical in having enough time to escape the deadly effects of smoke and heat that a fire can generate. In 2003, Monterey County suffered six fire fatalities from three separate incidents, all in residential structures. Additionally, there have been 3 fire related fatalities at Army installations in the US within the past 90 days. In all cases, smoke detectors were either not present or not operating. Had smoke detectors been properly installed and operating, the outcomes of these fires could have been much different. According to the National Fire Protection Association, *"more than half of home fire deaths result from fires in the 5% of homes with no working smoke alarms."* In light of recent events on Army installations where Soldiers and their families were disastrously affected by fires in military housing, the Presidio of Monterey Fire Department is offering the following tips on the proper testing and inspection of home smoke detectors.

- Test your smoke alarms once a month, following the manufacturer's instructions.
- Replace the batteries in your smoke alarm twice a year, or as soon as the alarm "chirps" a warning that the battery is low. A hint is to schedule battery replacements for the same day you change your clocks from daylight savings time to standard time in the fall.
- Never "borrow" a battery from a smoke alarm. Smoke alarms cannot warn you of fire if the batteries are missing and/ or have been disconnected.
- Don't disable smoke alarms even temporarily. If your smoke alarm is sounding "nuisance alarms," try relocating it farther from kitchens or bathrooms, where cooking fumes and steam can cause the alarm to sound.
- Regularly vacuuming or dusting your smoke alarms can keep them working properly, but be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Consider installing smoke alarms with "long-life" or 10-year batteries.
- Plan regular fire drills to ensure that everyone knows exactly what to do when the smoke alarm sounds. Hold a drill at night to make sure that sleeping family members awaken at the sound of the alarm. Some studies have shown that some children may not awaken to the sound of the smoke alarm. Know what your child will do before a fire occurs.
- **If unsure of how to perform any or all of these practices contact the local Fire Department**
- Check the following websites for more info
 - National Fire Protection Association www.nfpa.org
 - Energizer Batteries www.energizer.com/firesafety/
 - Consumer Product Safety Commission www.cpsc.gov

The POMFD would also like to remind everyone of the Wildland Fire dangers. Everyone is cautioned to please take special care with smoking materials, barbecue grills and disposal of hot coals.

The POMFD is here to support all military, active and retired, and Department of Defense civilian personnel on the Monterey Peninsula. The Fire Prevention Branch is available to provide training for any and all personnel residing on the Presidio of Monterey or Ord Military Community in a variety of subjects to include: fire safety in the home, portable fire extinguisher use and natural disaster awareness training.

All residents of OMC or the Presidio may request a Home Safety Survey to see how they may make their house a safer place for them and their family. For these services or any other related questions, call the Presidio of Monterey Fire Prevention Office at 242-7544.

