

Smoke Alarms Save Lives



When it comes to fire safety, having a working smoke detector has helped save the lives of thousands over the years. Statistics show that three out of five home fire deaths result from fires in properties without working smoke alarms. But the risk of dying in a home fire is cut in half in homes that have working smoke alarms. Smoke alarms are a key part of a home fire escape plan. When there is a fire, smoke spreads fast. Working smoke alarms give you early warning so you can get outside quickly. When in doubt as to how best to use ones' smoke detector, here are some key tips:

- Install smoke alarms in every sleeping room and outside each separate sleeping area. Install alarms on every level of the home. Install alarms in the basement. Smoke alarms should be interconnected. When one sounds, they all sound.
- Large homes may need extra smoke alarms.
- It is best to use interconnected smoke alarms. When one smoke alarm sounds they all sound.
- Test all smoke alarms at least once a month. Press the test button to be sure the alarm is working.
- Today's smoke alarms will be more technologically advanced to respond to a multitude of fire conditions, yet mitigate false alarms.
- A smoke alarm should be on the ceiling or high on a wall. Keep smoke alarms away from the kitchen to reduce false alarms. They should be at least 10 feet (3 meters) from the stove.
- People who are hard-of-hearing or deaf can use special alarms. These alarms have strobe lights and bed shakers.
- Replace all smoke alarms when they are 10 years old.
- Smoke alarms are an important part of a home fire escape plan.

Because smoke detectors play such an important role in life safety, the St Charles Fire Department has developed an outreach program to help supply senior citizens and those in need with smoke detectors and CO detectors for their home. The program consists of four major components:

- Home assessments to determine the need for smoke alarms and identify any existing fire hazards in older adults' homes.
- Smoke alarm installation to ensure participants' homes are adequately equipped with working smoke alarms.
- Education to provide in-person fire safety messages and tips to older adults, their family members and caregivers.
- Follow-up to determine if alarms are still working; to assess any changes in the older adults' fire safety knowledge, attitudes and behaviors; and to see if any fires have occurred.

Anyone in needs of assistance with their smoke detectors can contact the St Charles Fire Department at (630) 377-4458.