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When You Change Your Clock, Change Your Battery

Kent, Wash. - October 28, 2015- It is almost that time of year again when we move from Daylight Savings Time to Standard Time and adjust our clocks *back* one hour at 2:00 AM on November 1st.

The Kent Fire Department RFA would like to remind you that when you change your clocks, you should also change the batteries in your smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) alarms. Alarms which run on batteries or hardwired smoke alarms with battery backups need to be changed annually to ensure they work when you need them. Remember - a smoke or CO alarm only warns you if it is working.

Another type of annual maintenance you can perform on your smoke and CO alarms is to vacuum them out when you change the batteries. Dust can accumulate in the small grill near the sensor, blocking its ability to detect and warn you with an audible alarm.

Keep in mind that smoke and CO alarms have a life expectancy of approximately 10 years. If yours are that old, or you are not sure how old they are, replace them and write the purchase date on the inside of the new alarms (there is also a date stamp on the back of the alarm).

There are two major types of smoke alarms: ionization for detecting fast burning fires such as a stove top fire; and photoelectric for smoldering fires that includes a discarded cigarette in a waste basket. You can also buy alarms that combine both types of sensors for the best coverage of all.

Select the type of alarm which best suits your needs. In all cases, choose an alarm which has the Underwriters Laboratory (UL) seal of approval.

Smoke alarm facts:

- Smoke alarms save lives by reducing the risk of dying in a home fire by 40-50%.
- Households with nonworking smoke alarms outnumber those with no alarms at all.
- Nearly half of all smoke alarms do not work due to missing or dead batteries.

For carbon monoxide alarms, read the manufacturer's instructions on where to place them. Unlike smoke alarms, CO alarms can be located in one of several different locations depending on their design type. Like smoke alarms, make sure there is a UL seal of approval on any CO alarms you buy.

Avoid bringing gasoline powered generators or BBQs near or into homes and never leave a vehicle running in a garage. Watch for signs and symptoms of CO poisoning. They include:

- Headaches, dizziness, or lightheadedness
- Nausea and vomiting
- Shortness of breath
- Loss of consciousness

If you think that CO has entered your home, evacuate and call 9-1-1 immediately.

Did You Know? Smoke alarms beep three times when activated while carbon monoxide alarms beep four times.

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