FIRE SAFETY

How Smoke Alarms Save Lives

(NAPSA)—A smoke alarm is one of the best safety features that homeowners can buy and install to protect themselves, their families and their property.

The impact of smoke alarms on fire safety and protection is dramatic—sixty percent of all fatal fires occur in homes without working smoke alarms. The benefits can be simply stated: When fire breaks out, smoke alarms, functioning as early warning systems, reduce the risk of death by giving people time to alert loved ones to the fire and to get out.

Location Of Your Smoke Alarm

Install smoke alarms on every level of your home. Many fatal fires begin late at night or in the early morning. For extra safety, install smoke alarms both inside and outside sleeping areas.

Also, smoke alarms should be installed on ceilings or walls six to eight inches below ceilings. Since smoke and many deadly gases rise, installing smoke alarms at the proper level will provide you with the earliest warning possible. Always follow the manufacturer's installation instructions.

Acquiring Your Smoke Alarm

Most hardware, home supply or general merchandise stores carry smoke alarms. If you are unsure where to buy one, call the fire department (on a non-emergency telephone number). Some fire departments offer smoke alarms for little or no cost.
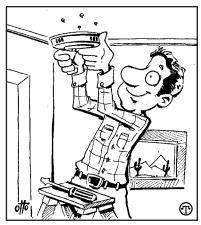
Installing Your Smoke Alarm

In most cases, all you will need is a screwdriver. Many brands are self-adhesive and will automatically stick to walls or ceilings. However, be sure to follow the directions from the manufacturer because each brand is different. Call the fire department if you have problems installing a smoke alarm.

Keeping Your Smoke Alarm Working

Smoke alarms are very easy to take care of:

• Replace the batteries at least

Smoke alarms can dramatically increase a family's chances of escaping a house fire unharmed.

once a year. Some smoke alarms now come with ten-year batteries. These alarms must be replaced as whole units, thus avoiding the need for battery replacement. If your smoke alarm starts making a "chirping" noise, replace the batteries and reset it.

• Keep alarms clean. Dust and debris can interfere with smoke alarms.

What If The Alarm Goes Off While I'm Cooking?

Then it's doing its job. Do not disable your smoke alarm if it goes off due to cooking or other non-fire causes. Instead, clear the air by waving a towel near the alarm, and leave the batteries in place. The alarm may have to be moved to a new location.

The United States Fire Administration, an entity of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, is considered the leader in the areas of public fire education and awareness, fire service training, fire-related technology and data collection.

For more information on fire safety topics, write to the United States Fire Administration, Public Fire Education, Building I, 16825 South Seton Avenue, Emmitsburg, MD 21727, or visit USFA's Web site at www.usfa.fema.gov.