

# SAFETY CHECKUP

## Change Your Smoke Alarm Batteries When You Change Your Clocks

(NAPSA)—Home fires affect the lives of American families every 85 seconds. That's why the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) and more than 5,700 fire departments nationwide “keep going” and urge families to Change Your Clock, Change Your Battery™. Participation is easy. When you change your clocks back on October 31, make sure to also change the battery in your smoke alarm.

Although smoke alarms are present in 95 percent of American homes, 20 percent do not work due to worn or missing batteries—which means nearly 19 million homes are at needless risk.

By adopting the habit of changing batteries and making sure smoke alarms are working, experts at the IAFC believe Americans can more than double their chances of surviving a fire. This year, use the extra hour to make fire safety a priority by following these few simple steps:

- Plan, discuss and practice a fire escape route with your family. This is crucial since it is estimated that only 25 percent of U.S. families have such a plan in place.
- Keep matches, lighters and other fire-starting materials away from children.
- Place space heaters and other portable heaters three feet away from anything that can burn. Make sure heaters are turned off when leaving the room or going to sleep.
- Make sure the smoke alarm in your home is working. This last step is significant since approximately 80 percent of fire fatalities in the U.S. result from fires in



**Families should adopt the life saving practice of changing their smoke alarm batteries each fall when they set their clocks back at the end of Daylight Savings.**

homes without working smoke alarms. By providing an early warning—and critical extra seconds to escape—smoke alarms can cut a family's risk of dying in a fire in half.

In the mid 1980s, the IAFC and Energizer brand Batteries recognized a disturbing trend—home fire deaths and injuries were increasing despite widespread use of smoke alarms. Research showed nonworking smoke alarms were often responsible. It was then that the two organizations joined forces to spread the lifesaving message about proper smoke alarm maintenance.

Together they founded the Change Your Clock, Change Your Battery program. Now in its 17th year, the program has donated nearly two million nine-volt batteries to reach children, senior citizens and families in communities nationwide.

In celebration of fire depart-

ments that keep going, to spread the message of fire safety in their communities, Energizer Max is awarding five fire departments with the first ever Keep Going™ Award for Fire Safety. Winning the award will allow these five departments to further their community-wide Change Your Clock, Change Your Battery fire safety efforts.

According to Chief Robert DiPoli, president of the IAFC, the peak time for home fire fatalities is between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. when most families are sleeping. “Smoke alarm maintenance is a simple, effective way to reduce home fire deaths. Children and senior citizens are most at risk and a working smoke alarm can give them the extra seconds they need to safely escape,” he says.

The IAFC is a non-profit professional organization representing more than 12,000 chief fire officers and emergency services leaders worldwide.