March 8th, 2024

**News Release**

**Change Your Clocks, Change Your Smoke Alarm Batteries**

News release prepared by:

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 On Sunday, March 10th, 2024, the annual spring ritual of "spring forward" will take place. The Missoula Rural Fire District (MRFD) would like to remind everyone that changing your clocks is also time for another spring ritual: changing the batteries in your smoke alarms.

Did you know that the death rate per 100 reported home fires was more than twice as high in homes that did not have any working smoke alarms compared to the rate in homes with working smoke alarms (1.18 deaths vs. 0.53 deaths per 100 fires)? In fires where the smoke alarms were present but did not operate, almost half (46%) of the smoke alarms had missing or disconnected batteries. Dead batteries caused one-quarter (24%) of the smoke alarm failures. (Source: National Fire Protection Administration)

At a minimum, standard smoke alarm batteries should be changed at least once a year and preferably twice a year. The fall and springtime changes are great reminders for folks to change their smoke alarm batteries. Here are a few other tips to ensure that your smoke alarm is functioning properly:

* Smoke alarms should be installed on every level of the house, including the basement.
* Install working smoke alarms in every bedroom and outside each sleeping area.
* Consider interconnecting your smoke alarms so that if one activates, they all activate. This can be done with hard wiring or through wireless technology.
* Today’s smoke alarms are more technologically advanced to respond to a multitude of fire conditions yet mitigate false alarms.
* Smoke rises, so make sure your smoke alarms are installed on the ceiling or high up on a wall.
* Ensure that everyone in your household knows what the smoke alarms sound like when activated and that they know two ways out of every room.
* If your smoke alarm is ten years old or older, replace it.

Smoke alarms are a relatively inexpensive way to ensure that your family is protected in case of fire, and they can be purchased at any department or hardware store. If you need smoke alarms and cannot afford them, MRFD has a limited number available at no charge. For additional information or for media inquiries, please contact MRFD Station #1 at 406-549-6172.

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