



NEW YORK DEPARTMENT OF STATE'S OFFICE OF FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL URGES ALL NEW YORKERS TO MAKE SURE THEIR HOMES HAVE WORKING SMOKE ALARMS

State Fire Steps Up Education Campaign After Recent Tragedies

ALBANY – (January 6, 2009) – The New York Department of State's Office of Fire Prevention and Control (OFPC) urges all New Yorkers to make sure there are working smoke alarms in their residence, as well as to clean and test them regularly. The first few days of 2009 have proven tragic to the citizens of our state given the loss of nine lives in residential structure fires lacking operating smoke alarms.

The Department of State's Office of Fire Prevention and Control recently aided communities in the investigation of two tragic fires which claimed the lives of eight family members in Oswego County, ranging in age from six months to forty-two years, and a six-year-old girl in Herkimer County. There were no working smoke alarms found in either instance. As such, the occupants were not afforded the protection of being warned of the developing, ensuing fire thus providing an opportunity for early discovery and escape. Working smoke alarms can dramatically increase a person's chances of surviving a fire.

"Smoke alarms are the best way to protect your home and family in detecting a fire and providing them the opportunity for escape from a building involved in fire," said New York State Fire Administrator Floyd A. Madison. "We urge every household to prepare a home fire safety exit plan and to practice this plan routinely as a means to aid family members in swiftly exiting their home should a fire be detected."

Research by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) indicates that in 2004 no smoke alarms were present or operating in almost half (46%) of reported residential home fires. During the same period, 43% of all home fire deaths resulted from fires in homes with no smoke alarms, while 22% resulted from homes in which smoke alarms were present but did not operate. Sixty-five percent of reported home fire deaths between 2000-2004 resulted from fires in homes with no smoke alarms or inoperable smoke alarms. Far too many New York fire departments report they continue to respond to calls in homes each year where there is no working smoke alarm present.

Most fire deaths and injuries occur at night while victims are asleep and most vulnerable. Smoke alarms provide early warning, allowing occupants vital time to escape a fire. Most fire deaths are caused by toxic smoke, not flames.

When purchasing a smoke alarm, look for a loud alarm, a hush feature, a ten-year battery, a malfunction signal and UL listing. Take an active role in fire prevention with the following fire safety tips:

1. Place smoke alarms on every level of your home, outside each sleeping area and in every bedroom.
2. Test smoke alarms monthly.
3. Vacuum alarms monthly to remove dust and cobwebs.
4. Replace old alarms. Smoke alarms ten years old or older need to be replaced.

Alarms should never be disconnected and batteries should never be removed unless for replacement purposes. The State Office of Fire Prevention and Control wants all New Yorkers to understand the value working smoke alarms have in protecting people from the tragedy of a home fire death and emphasize the need to continue planning and practicing home fire escape plans.

For additional information regarding the proper installation, maintenance and benefits of home smoke detectors, please contact your local fire officials or the New York State Department of State's Office of Fire Prevention and Control at

www.dos.state.ny.us/fire



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