

City of Bristol Tennessee

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CONTACT: Bob Barnes, Fire Chief
Jack Spurgeon, Asst. Fire Chief
Bristol Tennessee Fire Department
Phone: 423-989-5701
E-Mail: rbarnes@bristoltn.org
jspurgeon@bristoltn.org

Smoke Alarms: Up, Down and All Around

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has announced this year's theme for Fire Prevention Week, "Smoke Alarms: A sound you can live with". From October 3 through October 9, 2010, the Bristol Tennessee Fire Department will be promoting the theme locally with a number of activities geared toward ensuring public awareness of the value of properly working smoke detectors. According to Bristol Tennessee Fire Chief, Bob Barnes, "Fire personnel promote fire safety throughout the year with a variety of public education programs and initiatives, but during fire prevention week we focus almost entirely on activities designed to educate the public". Barnes says, "NFPA statistics indicate that approximately two-thirds of home fire deaths occur in homes with either no smoke alarms at all or non-working smoke alarms".

Fire personnel will be stressing that working smoke alarms are needed in every home, on every level, outside of each sleeping area, and inside of each bedroom. While the NFPA reports that properly working smoke detectors increase your chances of survival from a house fire by fifty per cent, too often homes are not equipped with detectors, or the detectors are not properly maintained. Residents should ensure that detectors have fresh, working batteries that are properly connected, and that detectors be replaced every 10 years.

The NFPA and the Bristol Fire Department agree that interconnected smoke alarms offer the best protection; when one alarm activates, they all do. This is particularly important in larger or multi-story homes where a distant alarm may not be loud enough to provide proper warning, especially for sleeping individuals.

Assistant Fire Chief and Fire Marshal, Jack Spurgeon, who also serves as the department's Public Education Officer, warns about being complacent and careless about smoke detector installation and maintenance. Spurgeon says that the department's goal is for every Bristol family to have proper and full smoke alarm protection and offers the following tips:

- Test smoke alarms at least once a month using the test button, and make sure everyone in your home knows their sound.
- If an alarm "chirps," warning the battery is low, replace the battery right away.
- Replace all smoke alarms every ten years or sooner if they do not respond properly when tested. This includes detectors that use 10-year batteries and hard-wired.
- Never remove or disable a smoke alarm.

To find out more about Fire Prevention Week programs and activities in Bristol, please contact Assistant Fire Chief/Fire Marshal Jack Spurgeon, Jr. at (423) 989-5701.

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