



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Fire Prevention Week emphasizes importance of smoke alarms

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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National Fire Prevention Week is Oct. 3-9, 2010. This year's theme, as designated by the National Fire Protection Association, is "*Smoke Alarms: A Sound You Can Live With.*" According to the association, every 23 seconds a fire department responds to a fire somewhere in the nation. In 2009 there were an estimated 1,348,500 fires, which resulted in 3,010 civilian fire fatalities and 17,050 civilian fire injuries.

Smoke alarms can mean the difference between life and death in a fire. Roughly, two-thirds of all home fire deaths result from fires in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms. Statistics show that working smoke alarms cut the chance of dying in a fire by nearly 50 percent. Many homes do not have any smoke alarms, not enough smoke alarms, alarms that are too old, and alarms that are not working or maintained properly.

"We want residents to understand that working smoke alarms are needed in every home, on every level (including the basement), outside each sleeping area, and inside each bedroom," said Jamey Durham, director of the Injury Prevention Branch, Alabama Department of Public Health.

All smoke alarms 10 years old or older need to be replaced. Also important is creating a home fire escape plan. The plan should include knowing two ways out of every room; designating a safe meeting place; and evacuating children, elderly and disabled family members.

Alabama's State Fire Marshal Ed Paulk emphasized the importance of selecting the right family meeting place, "Don't put the escaping family in harm's way by choosing a driveway or a spot by the mailbox. Choose a location away from the house that is easily accessible for the occupants and away from the location where arriving help will be parking."

Fire departments throughout Alabama will be hosting activities during Fire Prevention Week to promote proper smoke alarm installation and better educate their local residents on fire prevention. Contact your local fire department to learn more about protecting your family and home. Fire Prevention Week activities will help citizens learn more about the power of smoke alarms; newer options for installing and maintaining them properly; and ultimately, how to better protect their loved ones from fire.

The Alabama Department of Public Health offers the following tips for making sure smoke alarms are maintained and working properly:

- Test smoke alarms monthly using the test button, and make sure everyone in your home knows their sound.
- Replace batteries at least once a year or when a low-battery alarm chirps.
- Replace all smoke alarms, including alarms that use 10-year batteries and hard-wired alarms, when they are 10 years old (or sooner) if they do not respond properly when tested.
- Never remove or disable a smoke alarm.
- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, outside each sleeping area, and inside each bedroom.
- Interconnect all smoke alarms throughout the home. When one sounds, they all sound.
- Keep alarms free of dirt and dust buildup according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Develop an escape plan and practice your family plan monthly.

Evacuation planning should include:

- Locating two ways out
- Testing doors for heat
- Crawling low under smoke
- Designating a safe meeting place
- Calling 911

Because your family may have as little as two minutes to escape, it is essential that everyone in your family is able to recognize the sound of a smoke alarm and know how to escape safely.

To find out more about Fire Prevention Week programs and activities, please contact your local fire department. To learn more about "Smoke Alarms: A Sound You Can Live With!," visit www.firepreventionweek.org.