

Safety Checks

Almost everyone remembers participating in a fire safety drill during elementary school. But as adults, many of us can't recall the last time we practiced or thought about fire safety. Basic fire safety measures can dramatically reduce the thousands of needless deaths and injuries caused each year by home fires. Perhaps the most critical fire safety measure is smoke detector maintenance. A working smoke detector reduces by nearly half your risk of dying in a home fire. Yet although smoke detectors are in 85% of our homes, about one-third don't work because of worn out or missing batteries. The "Change" program sponsored by Fire district 5 and the City of Gig Harbor urges Gig Harbor citizens to adopt the lifesaving habit of changing the batteries in your smoke detector when you change your clocks back from daylight-savings time each fall. So each fall, on the last Saturday in October, when you set your clocks back, use the extra hour to change your smoke detector batteries and to review other safety measures. Here's a checklist of activities to help you protect your family and your belongings:

Change Your Smoke Detector Batteries The IAFC recommends changing smoke detector batteries at least annually. An easy way to remember is "Change Your Clock, Change Your Battery" during the fall time change weekend. To keep your smoke detectors going for a full year, use high quality alkaline batteries. **Check Your Smoke Detectors** After inserting fresh batteries, make sure the detector itself still works by pushing the test button. **Count Your Smoke Detectors** Install at least one smoke detector on every level of your home, including the basement and family room, and most important, outside all bedrooms. **Vacuum Your Smoke Detectors** Clean your detectors of dust and cobwebs which can impair sensitivity by clogging the wiring. Repeat monthly. **Change Your Flashlight Batteries** Keep a working flashlight near your bed, in the kitchen, basement and family room and use it to signal for help in the event of a fire. To keep it long-lasting, use high-quality alkaline batteries. **Install and Test Fire Extinguishers** Install a fire extinguisher in or near your kitchen and know how to use it. Test it annually. If you need to purchase one, the IAFC recommends a multi-purpose or all-purpose fire extinguisher that is listed by an accredited testing laboratory such as Underwriters Laboratory. **Plan and Practice Your Escape** Develop at least two different escape routes and practice them with the entire family. Children are often the innocent victims of fire because they become scared and confused. Make sure your children understand that a smoke detector signals a home fire and recognize its alarm.

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