



San Rafael



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Marin Voice: Ways to Make Your Home Fire Safe

Marin Voice Submission, by Christopher Gray
Posted, Marin IJ online: 06/25/2010 12:09:33 AM PDT

On June 11, a life of a San Rafael resident was saved from a fire in his home. The smoke alarm woke him from his sleep at 1:25 a.m. From the alarm sounding, to following directions of the 9-1-1 dispatcher, to the prompt response and rescue of this individual by San Rafael firefighters, a life was saved.

All too often, your firefighters have witnessed the tragedy and devastation of home fires. Unfortunately smoke alarms are present in only 70 percent of all reported home fires and operate only half the time.

The simple testing and replacement of your smoke alarms' batteries, if your detectors are not hard-wired, will dramatically increase your family's chances of surviving a fire in your home.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, the hours between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m. are the peak alarm times for home fire deaths - when people tend to be asleep.

40 percent of all home fire deaths resulted from fires in homes with no smoke alarms, while 23 percent resulted from homes in which smoke alarms were present but did not operate.

Unfortunately, nearly two children die each day in home fires. Children are at increased risk in a home fire because they often become scared and confused when a fire erupts. Make sure your children recognize the sound of your home's smoke alarm and teach them to respond to its signal.

Seniors are at high risk and those age 75 and older are three times more likely to die in a home fire.

Try to test your smoke alarm at least once a month and help it remain sensitive and ready to protect you by gently using a vacuum cleaner to remove dust and cobwebs. If your smoke alarms have been accidentally painted or contaminated, replacement may be necessary.

Nuisance activations were the leading cause of disabled smoke alarms. Cooking fumes and steam can cause a smoke alarm to sound. Nuisance alarms can be prevented by moving the smoke alarm farther from kitchens or bathrooms. A chirping smoke alarm means the battery is dying. Smoke alarms work every minute of every day and they should be replaced every 10 years.

- Install at least one fire extinguisher in or near your kitchen and learn how to use it. We urge you to complete a Marin "Get Ready" two-hour disaster preparedness class to help yourself and your family better manage emergencies. Call 458-5002 for more information.

- Make sure your emergency flashlights work. It is good to have a working flashlight and even a whistle near your bed, in the kitchen and family room. You can use them to signal for help or direct rescuers in the event of a fire or other emergency.

- Plan your escape with hopefully two ways out so when a fire occurs, you don't delay. Get out of the house quick and stay out. Close doors behind you if possible. Quickly gather outside, preferably at a pre-determined meeting place, and then notify the fire department by calling 911 from a safe location.

Your firefighters are trained and equipped to rescue your family and pets, as well as to protect your possessions. Help your firefighters by remaining together outside the home and directing them to endangered family or valuables.

We hope these fire safety tips will help keep your family safe. Please remember that fire prevention is always your best course of action. Smoke alarms can be purchased at your local hardware store and even drug stores. We're also happy to do home inspections if needed.

Please learn more about fire and life safety by visiting your neighborhood Marin fire station or giving us a call at 485-3304.

Christopher Gray, Fire Chief
City of San Rafael