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American Red Cross Urges Fire Safety

“Install or check smoke detectors and follow safety tips during National Fire Prevention Week.”

As the country marks National Fire Prevention Week October 3-9 the American Red Cross is urging everyone to help save lives by making sure their home is protected by smoke alarms.

“The largest percentage of home fire deaths occur in homes with no smoke alarms or alarms that don’t work,” said Tim Lipan, Executive Director, American Red Cross. “Smoke alarms provide a few minutes of advance warning in the event of a home fire, and that extra time can save lives.”

People who do not have smoke alarms in their home should have them installed, and those with smoke alarms should make sure they have been properly maintained and updated.

Smoke alarms should be installed on every level of the home, as well as inside bedrooms, and outside sleeping areas of the home. People should test their smoke alarms once a month by pushing the test button, and replace alarm batteries at least once a year. Other smoke alarm safety recommendations include:

- Installing a new smoke alarm battery immediately if an alarm chirps, warning that the battery is low.
- Teaching children what the smoke alarm sounds like, and what they should do when they hear it.
- Keeping the alarm clean by vacuuming over and around it regularly. Dust and debris can interfere with the alarm’s operation. Do not paint over the smoke alarm.
- Moving the alarm farther away from the kitchen or bathroom if the device is sounding nuisance alarms. Never disable a smoke alarm.

The Red Cross also recommends that families create and practice a home fire escape plan, which should include at least two escape routes for every room in the home. Families should choose a convenient meeting place outside of the home and practice their escape plan at least twice a year with all family members.

Nationally, the Red Cross responds to thousands of local fires throughout the country every year. Last year, the local Red Cross responded to nearly 100 house fires providing food, clothing, shelter, medical needs and emotional support to over 430 individuals.

The Red Cross reminds people of the following fire safety tips they should take:

- Keep all sources of fuel (paper, clothing, bedding, and carpets or rugs) at least three feet away from all heat sources when cooking, or using alternative heating like a space heater.
- Don't leave the kitchen while frying, grilling or broiling food, and don't leave home while cooking.
- Keep matches and lighters away from and out of the reach of children.
- If a fire occurs, get out and stay out. Call the fire department from a cell phone or neighbor's home.
- If smoke or fire blocks the first escape route, use a second way. If someone must exit through smoke, they should crawl low under the smoke to the exit. If escaping through a closed door, feel the door before opening it. If the door is warm, get out a different way.
- If smoke, heat, or flames block the way out, stay in the room with the door closed. Signal for help using a brightly colored cloth at the window. If there is a telephone in the room, call the fire department and tell them the location

More information on home fire safety is available on www.redcross.org. People can help those affected by home fires and other emergencies by making a financial donation to American Red Cross, 313 W. Webster, Muskegon Michigan, 49440.

About the American Red Cross:

The American Red Cross shelters, feeds and provides emotional support to victims of disasters; supplies nearly half of the nation's blood; teaches lifesaving skills; provides international humanitarian aid; and supports military members and their families. The Red Cross is a charitable organization — not a government agency — and depends on volunteers and the generosity of the American public to perform its mission. For more information, please visit www.redcross.org.