

Dear Parent or Caregiver:



Fire Prevention Week 2004 is here! For this year's theme, "It's Fire Prevention Week: Test Your Smoke Alarms," our class is going to be learning about the importance of smoke alarms. During Fire Prevention Week, an annual safety campaign sponsored by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), our class will be learning how kids and their families can be safer from fire. By making sure that you have working smoke alarms properly installed in your home, you'll greatly improve your family's chances of surviving a home fire.

Roughly 70 percent of home fire deaths result from fires in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms. We'll be learning how to install smoke alarms correctly, when to test them to make sure they're working properly, and what to do when the alarm sounds. Taking these important safety lessons to heart is especially important for families with kids like yours.

By teaching kids about fire safety we can make sure that they know just what to do in the event of a home fire, knowledge that very well could save their lives. As your child's primary caregiver, you can support this effort by following a few of the simple fire safety lessons included with this letter. Your son or daughter can help with some of these; others should only be performed by an adult. As a teacher, I'm committed to helping my students live up to their full potential. Keeping them safe is an important first step. Home fires can be deadly, but by following these safety tips, you'll be helping to make your family safer.

Sincerely:





“It’s Fire Prevention Week: Test Your Smoke Alarms”



Install smoke alarms correctly

- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, including the basement, making sure that there is an alarm outside each separate sleeping area. New homes are required to have a smoke alarm in every sleeping room and all smoke alarms must be interconnected.
- If you sleep with bedroom doors closed, have a qualified electrician install interconnected smoke alarms in each room so that when one alarm sounds, they all sound.
- Mount smoke alarms high on walls or ceilings (remember, smoke rises).
- Don’t install smoke alarms near windows, doors, or ducts where drafts might interfere with their operation.
- Never paint smoke alarms. Paint, stickers, or other decorations could keep the alarms from working.

Check your smoke alarms regularly

- Test your smoke alarms once a month, following the manufacturer’s instructions.
- Replace the batteries in your smoke alarm once a year, or as soon as the alarm “chirps” warning that the battery is low. Hint: schedule battery replacements for the same day you change your clocks from daylight savings to standard time in the fall.
- Never “borrow” a battery from a smoke alarm.
- Don’t disable smoke alarms even temporarily. If your smoke alarm is sounding “nuisance alarms,” try relocating it farther from kitchens or bathrooms, where cooking fumes and steam can cause the alarm to sound, or replace the alarm with one that has a pause, silencer or hush button.
- Regularly vacuuming or dusting your smoke alarms, following the manufacturer’s instructions, can keep them working properly.
- Smoke alarms don’t last forever. Replace yours once every 10 years. If you can’t remember how old the alarm is, then it’s probably time for a new one.
- Consider installing smoke alarms with “long-life” (10-year) batteries.



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Know how to respond when the alarm sounds

Fire can spread rapidly through your home, leaving you as little as two minutes to escape safely once the alarm sounds. Your ability to get out depends on advance warning from smoke alarms, and advance planning — a home fire escape plan that everyone in your family is familiar with and has practiced.

- Make sure that everyone in your home can recognize the sound of the alarm, and knows exactly what to do when it sounds. Some studies have shown that some children may not awaken to the sound of the smoke alarm. Know what your child will do before a fire occurs.
- Pull together everyone in your household and make a plan. Walk through your home and inspect all possible exits and escape routes. Draw a floor plan of the home, marking two ways out of each room, including windows and doors. Also, mark the location of each smoke alarm.
- Choose an outside meeting place (i.e. neighbor's house, a light post, mailbox, or stop sign) a safe distance in front of your home where everyone can meet after they've escaped. Make sure to mark the location of the meeting place on your escape plan.
- Practice the escape plan at least twice a year.
- If there are infants, older adults or family members with mobility limitations make sure that someone is assigned to assist them in the fire drill and in the event of an emergency. Assign a backup person too, in case the designee is not home during the emergency.
- Be fully prepared for a real fire: when a smoke alarm sounds, get out immediately.

For additional information about fire safety, home fire escape plans (including information for high-rise buildings), and smoke alarms check out these Web sites:

www.sparky.org

www.firepreventionweek.org

www.nfpa.org