

Opinion: Time to change clocks and batteries

By Teri Mizuhara

It's that time of year again, time to change your clocks and change the batteries in your smoke alarms. Set your clocks back one hour before you go to bed tonight and while you're at it, take a few minutes and change the batteries in your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms. Then you can rest easy knowing your loved ones are being protected.

"According to the U.S. Fire Administration, 75 percent of fire deaths in residences occur in homes that either do not have smoke alarms or do not have working smoke alarms," says Kelly Keenan, unit chief of the Amador-El Dorado Unit of CalFire. "It is the cheapest insurance to safe guard you and your family in the event your home catches on fire. Bottom line, a working smoke alarm greatly increases your chance of surviving a house

Smoke alarm and carbon monoxide alarm tips:

- At a minimum, install a smoke alarm and a carbon monoxide alarm outside each sleeping area.
- It is also prudent to install smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms in each bedroom/sleeping area.
- Install smoke alarms on each level of your home including the basement.
- If your alarms are plugged in to an electrical outlet, don't forget to change the back-up batteries if they have them.
- If you have children, consider purchasing the smoke alarms with recordable voice announcements.

- If you or someone in your home is hearing impaired, there are specialized smoke alarms systems available.
- Make sure all the alarms are linked so that when one goes off they all go off.
- Test your smoke alarms once a month.
- Clean smoke alarms by vacuuming them. This removes dust and bugs that can cause them to malfunction.

For additional fire and life safety tips, go online.

Teri Mizuhara works for CalFire.