

Fall back into safety

Time to change your clocks, check your smoke alarms

FASNY reminds New Yorkers to inspect their smoke & CO alarms, as busiest time of the year for fires is approaching

GUEST EDITORIAL BY THE FIREMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

As New Yorkers prepare for the end of Daylight Saving Time, the Firemen's Association of the State of New York (FASNY) is reminding all New Yorkers to check the batteries and test their smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors. Alarms equipped with removable batteries should have their batteries replaced.

In 2019, New York state led the nation in home fire deaths with a tragic 126 fatalities. The number has since decreased, but is still high – 77 civilians in New York have died in home fires during 2021. The upcoming winter season is typically the busiest time of year for home fires.

Working smoke alarms save lives. According to the National Fire Prevention Association (NFPA), three of every five home fire deaths occur in homes without working smoke alarms or in homes lacking smoke alarms. A quarter of all smoke alarm failures are caused by

dead batteries.

"Every second counts in a fire. Smoke alarms provide a critical warning that can help people escape during an emergency – but only if they are working properly," FASNY President John P. Farrell said. "All smoke alarms should be tested monthly. If your smoke alarm has removable batteries, make sure you change them twice a year to ensure that they are functioning.

The reduction in home fire deaths in recent years may be attributed to a New York state law that went into effect in 2019. It banned the sale of smoke alarms with removable batteries. Newly installed or replacement smoke alarms in the state of New York must be powered by a 10-year, sealed, nonremovable battery, or hardwired to the home. Smoke alarms equipped with sealed-in, nonremovable batteries are nearly impossible to disable and require little maintenance. If you're not sure when you last replaced the batteries, or bought a smoke alarm, FASNY encourages you to purchase a new one with 10-year batteries.



"Having a sufficient number of properly located smoke and CO alarms is essential to maximize the amount of escape time. As a minimum, smoke alarms should be installed inside every bedroom and on every level of the home. Larger homes require additional smoke alarms."

Smoke Alarm Tips from FASNY and NFPA

- ✓ Test alarms at least once a month by using the test button.
- ✓ If you have an alarm with a

removable battery, be sure to check the batteries every six months, and change the batteries every year. If a battery is starting to lose its power, the unit will usually chirp to warn you. Do not disable the unit.

- ✓ Vacuum or blow out any dust that might accumulate in the unit.
- ✓ Never borrow a battery from an alarm to use somewhere else.
- ✓ Never paint a smoke or CO alarm.

✓ Install at least one smoke alarm on every floor of your home, including the basement, and in, or near each sleeping area.

✓ Smoke alarms should not be installed near a window, because drafts could interfere with their operation.

✓ Families should also develop and practice a home fire escape plan.

✓ Always follow the manufacturer's instructions for testing smoke alarms and replacing the batteries.

For more information on smoke alarms, carbon monoxide alarms, and other information on fire safety and prevention, visit www.fasny.com and www.nfpa.org.

Founded in 1872, the Firemen's Association of the State of New York (FASNY) represents the interests of 85,000 volunteer firefighters and emergency medical personnel in New York state. For more information, visit www.fasny.com.

Halloween safety: Red Cross offers tips as pandemic continues

SUBMITTED BY THE AMERICAN RED CROSS

Trick-or-treating is back this Halloween; however, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic means there are extra factors to consider when planning your activities. The American Red Cross offers these tips and more to help keep you and your loved ones safe.

"Halloween is one of the most popular holidays in the U.S. and, with most communities returning to normal activities this school year, people should expect a higher volume of visitors in search of tricks and treats," said Colleen McCabe, interim regional executive, American Red Cross of Western New York. "Whether you're handing out goodies or going door-to-door, with just a few simple considerations, you can make sure your family and those around you are safe and sound."

Here are the top tips for parents to keep in mind while getting their kids ready for Halloween this year:

✓ Make your cloth mask part of your costume. A costume mask is not a safe substitute for a cloth mask. Avoid wearing a costume



mask over a cloth mask as it can make breathing difficult.

✓ Plan outdoor activities and avoid indoor events where the risk of virus transmission is higher.

✓ Bring hand sanitizer with you while trick-or-treating and use it after touching objects or other people. Wash your hands when you get home.

✓ Avoid trick-or-treating in large groups, and social distance from others around the neighborhood.

✓ Make sure trick-or-treaters can see and be seen. Give kids a flashlight to light their way and consider adding reflective tape to costumes and trick-or-treat bags.

✓ Plan the trick-or-treat route in advance and make sure adults know where their children are going. A parent or responsible adult should accompany young children door-to-door.

✓ It's not only vampires and monsters people have to look out for. Be cautious around animals, especially dogs.

✓ Walk only on the sidewalks, not in the street. Avoid running. Look both ways before crossing the street, and cross only at the corner. Don't cross between parked cars.

✓ Only visit homes that have a porch light on, and

never go inside.

✓ Make sure a grown-up checks the goodies before eating. Make sure to remove loose candy, open packages and choking hazards. Discard any items with brand names that you are not familiar with.

For those planning to welcome trick-or-treaters to their homes, follow these safety steps:

✓ Give out treats outdoors, if possible.

✓ Avoid direct contact with trick-or-treaters by setting up an area with individually bagged treats for kids to take. Wash your hands before handling treats.

✓ Maintain social distancing and wear a cloth mask.

✓ Light the area well so young visitors can see.

✓ Sweep leaves from your sidewalks and steps. Clear your porch or front yard of obstacles someone could trip over.

Download the free Red Cross First Aid app for instant access to expert advice in case your ghost, goblin or superhero has a mishap. Use the Emergency app for weather alerts and to let others know you are safe if severe weather occurs. Find these and all of the Red Cross apps in smartphone app stores by searching for the American Red Cross or going to redcross.org/apps.

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