

## **Did You Change Your Batteries In Your Smoke Detectors...**

*Article by: Fire Chief Jack Brown*

I DID! I have been a firefighter for over 33 years in St. Joseph, and worked countless residential fatality fires. I know first-hand the proven value of smoke detectors and the reason behind having fresh batteries in them so they will work properly when called upon. I am sure that I change my smoke detector batteries every time I change my clocks back, twice a year—YA, RIGHT! As I methodically took the batteries out of my five smoke detectors, I noticed that I had written the date of last change on the battery, as I did this time. Much to my dismay, the date I had written was 4/01! Not only had I NOT changed the batteries last spring, I did not change them at all LAST YEAR! Apparently I do procrastinate or forget sometimes - do you?

In a recent bulletin from the U.S. Fire Administration, statistics point to a fifty percent reduction in fire fatalities since the introduction of smoke detectors into the home. The vast majority of fatal fires (60 percent) occur in homes without smoke detectors. And, a majority of those deaths that occur in homes with smoke detectors are a result of dead or missing batteries. Even with this 50% reduction in residential fire deaths, some 2,700 people lost their lives in 2002 and another 14,000 were injured in residential fires. Please, do not think it can't happen to you.

Today the cost of owner-installed smoke detectors is as little as \$10 per detector. Many fire departments throughout the country, including your St. Joseph Fire Department, give away smoke detectors to those families who own their own homes and cannot afford to purchase one.

The impact of smoke detectors on fire safety and protection is dramatic and can be simply stated. When fire breaks out, the smoke detector, functioning as an early warning system, reduces the risk of dying by nearly 50 percent. Detectors are most people's first line of defense against fire.

If your home is equipped with "hard-wired" smoke detectors, you will want to discover if they also include a battery back up. In many instances during a fire, electrical power is frequently disrupted causing the smoke detector to not function.

In the event of a fire, a smoke detector can save your life and those of your loved ones. They are the single most important means of preventing house and apartment fire fatalities by providing an early warning signal - so you and your family can escape. Smoke detectors are one of the best safety features you can buy and install to protect yourself, your family, and your home. If you have not already done so, please **CHANGE YOUR BATTERIES!**