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Smoke Alarms: Up, Down and All Around

Caroline County Department of Fire and Rescue Reinforces Newer Smoke Alarm Recommendations During Fire Prevention Week, October 3-9, 2010

(October 3, 2010) – In an effort to better educate communities throughout the U.S. about smoke alarm recommendations, the nonprofit National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) is promoting “Smoke Alarms: A Sound You Can Live With!” as the theme for this year’s Fire Prevention Week campaign, October 3-9, which Caroline County is supporting locally. NFPA has been the official sponsor of Fire Prevention Week for 88 years.

“Many homes in Caroline County may not have any smoke alarms, not enough smoke alarms, alarms that are too old, or alarms that are not working,” says David Layman, Fire-EMS Chief of the Caroline County Department of Fire – Rescue & Emergency Management, “We want residents to understand that working smoke alarms are needed in every home, on every level (including the basement), outside each sleeping area and inside each bedroom. And, if a smoke alarm is 10 years old or older, it needs to be replaced.”

According to Chief Layman, smoke alarms can mean the difference between life and death in a fire. NFPA statistics show that working smoke alarms cut the chance of dying in a fire nearly in half. But they must be working properly to do so. The association’s data shows that many homes have smoke alarms that aren’t working or maintained properly, usually because of missing, disconnected or dead batteries. Roughly two-thirds of all home fire deaths result from fires in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms.

The Caroline County Department of Fire – Rescue & Emergency Management will be hosting activities during Fire Prevention Week to promote “Smoke Alarms: A Sound You Can Live With!” locally, to help Caroline County residents understand NFPA’s smoke alarm recommendations. These programs will include the Department performing fire safety presentations for 3rd graders at Madison Elementary, Bowling Green Elementary, and Lewis and Clark Elementary. The Annual National Fire Prevention week open house, which is joint effort between Fort A.P. Hill Fire and Rescue and Bowling Volunteer Fire Department, will be taking place Thursday, October 7th at the Virginia National Guard Armory, from 5pm-7:30pm. Through these educational, family-oriented activities, residents can learn more about the power of smoke alarms, newer options for installing and maintaining them properly, and ultimately, how to better protect their loved ones from fire.

NFPA and Caroline County Department of Fire – Rescue & Emergency Management, agree that interconnected smoke alarms offer the best protection; when one sounds, they all do. This is particularly important in larger or multi-story homes, where the sound from distant smoke alarms may be reduced to the point that it may not be loud enough to provide proper warning, especially for sleeping individuals.

“Most people have a sense of complacency about smoke alarms because they already have one in their homes. Fire Prevention Week provides an excellent opportunity to re-educate people about smoke alarms, new technologies and expanded options for installation and maintenance,” says Judy Comoletti, division manager for NFPA public education. “Ultimately, we want this year’s campaign to serve as a call to action for households nationwide to inspect their homes to ensure that their families have the full smoke alarm protection that’s recommended.”

Caroline County Department of Fire – Rescue & Emergency Management offers the following tips for making sure smoke alarms are maintained and working properly:

- Test smoke alarms at least once a month using the test button, and make sure everyone in your home knows their sound.
- If an alarm “chirps,” warning the battery is low, replace the battery right away.
- Replace all smoke alarms, including alarms that use 10-year batteries and hard-wired alarms, when they’re 10 years old (or sooner) if they do not respond properly when tested.
- Never remove or disable a smoke alarm.

To find out more about Fire Prevention Week programs and activities in Caroline County, please contact the Caroline County Department of Fire – Rescue & Emergency Management at 804-633-9831. To learn more about “Smoke Alarms: A Sound You Can Live With!,” visit NFPA’s Web site at www.firepreventionweek.org.