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**CITY OF RICHMOND**  
**DEPARTMENT OF FIRE & EMERGENCY SERVICES**  
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**201 E. Franklin Street**  
**RICHMOND, VIRGINIA 23219-1852**

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**Contact Person:**  
Lt. Shawn L. Jones  
PIO  
804.646.2502  
804.381.2688

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## **MEDIA ADVISORY**

### **CHANGE YOUR CLOCKS AND YOUR BATTERIES!**

*Richmond, VA* - As the time change approaches on Sunday, November 1, 2009, the Richmond Department of Fire and Emergency Services reminds residents to make another change that could save their lives — changing the batteries in their smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors.

Communities nationwide witness tragic home fire deaths each year. Approximately every 3 hours a home fire death occurs somewhere in the nation and 80 percent of those occur in homes without working smoke alarms. Non-working smoke alarms rob residents of the protective benefits home fire safety devices were designed to provide. The most commonly cited cause of non-working smoke alarms: worn or missing batteries.

Changing smoke alarm batteries at least once a year is one of the simplest, most effective ways to reduce these tragic deaths and injuries. In fact, working smoke alarms nearly cut in half the risk of dying in a home fire. Additionally, the international Association of Fire Chiefs recommends replacing your smoke alarms every ten years.

To save lives and prevent needless injuries in the City of Richmond, the Richmond Fire and Emergency Services has joined forces with Energizer and the International Association of Fire Chiefs for the 22<sup>nd</sup> year of the *Change Your Clock Change Your Battery* campaign. The program urges all Americans to adopt a simple, lifesaving habit: changing smoke alarm and carbon monoxide detector batteries when changing clocks back to standard time each fall, this year on November 1, and again during the spring time changes on March 14, 2010.

“The peak time for home fire fatalities is between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m. when most families are sleeping,” says Fire Chief Robert A. Creecy. “Smoke alarm maintenance is a simple, effective way to reduce home fire deaths. Children and senior citizens are most at risk, and a working smoke alarm can give them the extra seconds they need to get out safely”.

In addition, Chief Creecy recommends residents use the “extra” hour they save from the time change to test smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors by pushing the test button, planning “two ways out” and practicing escape routes with the entire family. Families should also prepare a fire safety kit that includes working flashlights and fresh batteries. During the spring, communities should use the time change on March 14, 2010 as an opportunity check the batteries in emergency power kits.

Tragically, fire can kill selectively. Those most at risk include:

- **Children**— About 600 individuals under the age of 20 die each year in home fires. Children under 5 are at twice the risk of dying in a home fire. Eighty percent of fatal home fire victims who were children were killed in homes without working smoke alarms.
- **Seniors**— Adults over age 75 are three times more likely to die in home fires than the rest of the population; those over 85 are 4.5 times more likely to die in a home fire. Many seniors are unable to escape quickly.
- **Low-Income Households**— Many lo-income families are unable to afford batteries for their smoke alarms. These same households often rely on poorly installed, maintained or misused portable or area heating equipment—a main cause of fatal home fires.

For more information about fire safety, call the City of Richmond Fire Prevention Office at (804) 646-6640.