

SMOKE DETECTOR SAFETY

The Danger of Residential Fires

The piercing ring of the smoke detector awakens you in the middle of the night. It is darker than you expect, and something burns your eyes. There's a fire in your house! Even as you wake your spouse, you realize you must reach the children.

It can happen to any family, and results in tragedy more often than you might realize. A fire can spread through a house in minutes. Rooms heat up to their "flash point" and explode into flames. The smoke is black, dense, and often poisonous; the heat can be far hotter than your oven's highest temperature setting.

That is why smoke detectors are so important. The chances of dying in a house fire are cut in half when a working smoke detector is present. Its early warning provides your family with enough time to escape to safety. Every home should have at least one—and probably several.

One of the leading causes of death among children is fire in the home. In fact, in nearly one-fourth of all states in the U.S., residential fires are the number one cause of death among children. More than two-thirds of those children are five years old or younger.

Because children's skin is thinner than that of adults, they burn more easily and suffer severe burns at lower temperatures. This makes children the most likely victims of what many medical

experts consider to be the most devastating injury a human being can sustain and survive. Excruciating pain can last for days or weeks, and the physical and psychological scars may last a lifetime.

According to statistics, the lower the socioeconomic status of a family, the more likely the family will face a fire in its home. Burned children are also more likely to be from single-parent families or to be one of several children in the home.

Club Involvement

A club can help prepare families for the danger of fire by conducting a community education campaign, installing smoke detectors, and replacing the batteries in smoke detectors. Any one of these activities would be helpful, but all three are needed.

A club that embarks on any of these projects should begin by contacting the local fire department or the union to which the fire fighters belong (after obtaining approval from the club's board of directors). These very natural allies will have expertise that will improve the education effort and credibility that will help get teams into houses to check or install smoke detectors. The fire department may have additional sources of educational materials, and the fire station can serve as the focus for organizing the campaign and developing publicity. In addition, contact your State or Local SAFE KIDS Coalition to

collaborate with Project GET ALARMED activities. Call the Campaign National Field Office at (202) 662-0600 for the name and telephone number of the nearest coalition coordinator. Or, e-mail them at: www.safekidsworldwide.com

Public Education

Most people don't understand what a fire in the home is like. As a result, they fail to prepare their children for the emergency, and they themselves are likely to respond inappropriately—putting their family in peril. The brochures titled "Fire-A Family Killer" and "Protect Your Children" are designed for your club to print and distribute throughout the community. They describe a residential fire and explain how to prepare for one. These brochures can be found in this bulletin as well as on the Kiwanis Web Site at www.kiwanis.org.

The brochures can be distributed at supermarkets, drug stores, libraries, community centers, schools, police stations, and, of course, fire stations. Another approach would be to have the brochures printed in a local newspaper or included with advertising circulars that are distributed to all homes in the community.

A more comprehensive education campaign could involve the purchase of materials from the National SAFE KIDS Campaign™, a national childhood safety

organization of which Kiwanis International is a member. The National SAFE KIDS Campaign has developed audiovisual programs which explain the importance of having working smoke detectors and a practiced escape plan. To learn more about the National SAFE KIDS Campaign contact them at www.safekids.org.

A variety of fire safety publications is available from the Resource Center of the National Volunteer Fire Council, 1325 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20004. Write or call (202) 887-5700 or 1-888-ASK-NVFC for a free catalog. E-mail address: www.nvfc.org.

Replacing Batteries

The National SAFE KIDS Campaign estimates that 80 percent of all homes in the United States have smoke detectors.

Unfortunately, only two-thirds of those homes are protected by their smoke detectors because the rest of them don't work. The International Association of Fire Chiefs is even more pessimistic. It estimates that half of all smoke detectors have dead or disconnected batteries.

There are three ways to address this problem. The club can offer to replace the smoke detector battery for anyone who requests it. Second, the club can send out teams to canvass neighborhoods, offering to check the battery in each home's smoke detector. Or, third, the club can develop a list of likely candidates (low-income families with young children) for assistance and target its efforts to those families.

Battery-Check Service

Announcing in the local media that the club will check smoke detectors on request allows the club to serve an entire community. Service is given only to those who request it, and it can be scheduled when convenient. If the club has a

large number of batteries and workers, the public service announcement can run once a week until the supplies are exhausted by requests. If resources are limited, these limits can be explained in the announcement.

To begin this project, the chairman should develop some estimate of either the number of requests the club might receive or the resources the club can devote to the project. A conservative approach would be to look at the support given to other recent new projects and calculate what could be accomplished with the same level of support, assuming each nine-volt battery costs three dollars, and each battery check will take half an hour (for travel, checking the battery, and replacing it). Look at your club's recent history and test the level of interest in the project to develop your own estimate.

A more ambitious approach would be to estimate the total number of requests that would result if the advertisement ran continuously for many weeks or months. Assume that 5 percent of the "audience" will respond by asking for a battery check. Now, figure out how many people giving four or five hours of their time would be needed to complete all these battery checks. This will probably require recruitment of additional workers for the project—perhaps going to other Kiwanis clubs, Circle K, Key Clubs, Builders Clubs, or other organizations.

Once the scope of the project, with cost and personnel estimates, has been approved by the club's board of directors, the committee can begin recruiting its "business partners" for the project. The first partners should be the fire department or fire fighters union. The participation of the fire fighters in the battery checks will open doors that might otherwise remain closed. Additional volunteer support can then be solicited from other clubs and organizations.

A second partner is a newspaper, radio station, or television station willing to

announce the battery-check service. Kiwanis clubs can also ask utility companies, TV weather reporters, and others to remind people to test their detectors and change batteries. A sample print public service announcement and an example of a radio/TV script appear on pages 4 and 6. The final partner is a store that will provide the batteries for free or at a significant discount. This can be a hardware store, discount house, supermarket, pharmacy, or any other merchant that sells a high volume of batteries. Manufacturers of batteries are also excellent potential partners.

As a committee receives letters or phone calls requesting help, it should set up assignments for one or two people to visit several houses. A sample assignment sheet appears on page 5. The team should call ahead to arrange times for its visits. Each team will need assorted sizes of batteries a ladder, flashlight, copies of fire safety literature to give to each family (see the ready-to-print brochures on pages 9 and 11), and release form liability forms (sample page 7). A screwdriver, a few screws, and a pair of pliers may prove helpful if a smoke detector proves difficult to open or is poorly secured.

When teams visit their assigned homes, they should complete the assignment sheet and return it to the committee. This will allow the committee to calculate the total effect of the project, follow-up on loose ends, and set up a list of families who should be contacts in the future about replacing batteries.

Canvassing a Neighborhood

Another approach to replacing batteries in smoke detectors is to select a neighborhood that seems to need this service and conduct a door-to-door campaign. The fire department can probably recommend several neighborhoods that have sustained a high number of home fires. People who

wouldn't notice or respond to an advertisement might receive help this way, and more children who are at risk will probably be protected. This approach also make it possible to identify homes that need smoke detectors, which could be installed at a later date. The drawback to this method is that a limited number of houses can be canvassed. Thus, the club may want to consider doing this project in conjunction with the smoke detector batter-check project. In any case, the neighborhood to be canvassed should be carefully chosen.

To begin a canvassing project, the committee should work with the fire department to identify a neighborhood that needs this project and count the number of homes to be visited (counting each apartment as a home). Assume that each team will canvass six homes per hour, then decide how many hours each team will work. Divide these numbers into the number of homes to be visited to discover how many teams are needed. Assume that one-half of the homes will need new batteries for their smoke detectors. With these estimates, the project can be presented to the club's board of directors for approval.

The business partners for this effort are the fire department or fire fighters union, a store that sells batteries, and a local printer. The printer is needed for a flyer (sample on page 4) that can be delivered to each house a week before the canvass, explaining what the club and fire fighters are doing and urging them to be at home during the canvass.

The committee can give each team a list of addresses to visit, with space for the team to write what happened at each address. Teams should be composed of a fire fighter and a Kiwanian, and it will help if the fire fighters wear their uniforms. At the end of the day, each team should hand in its list so that the committee can total up the number of families the project helped and note addresses that should be contacted again later.

Targeting Needy Families

The third approach to this project is to consult the human services department or other agencies (such as weatherization agencies, WIC, or AFDC) that help needy families. The club then contacts all the recommended families and offers to make a fire safety check. This approach allows the club to schedule all the appointments and more efficiently use members' time.

Secure approval of the club's board of directors before contacting the human services department. Informally survey the club to find out how many will participate in the project. Also, recruit business partners for the project, discussing with the stores involved how many families should be assisted. With these parameters in mind, contact agencies that help needy families and collect names, addresses, and phone numbers. Organizing this information will be easier on a computer.

Create short lists of a few families that are geographically close and give each list to a team, along with a blank index card for each contact and a script for the telephone call, like the one below:

"This is Robert Baillergeon from the Kiwanis Club of Freeport. My club, along with the Freeport Fire Department, is replacing batteries in smoke detectors and installing smoke detectors where they are needed. This is a free service. We're doing this because 90% of child fire deaths occur in homes without working smoke detectors. Would you like to participate in our safety check program? We'll be visiting homes during Fire Prevention Week October 6th through the 12th. Would you prefer that I send you a brochure first, or would you like to schedule an appointment now? Now? All right.

What day would be convenient for you? What time of day would be more convenient: morning, afternoon, or evenings? Morning

would be better? Okay. We can't guarantee a specific time, but we'll be there that morning.

Now, I'd like to confirm your address. And can you give me any other information that will make it easier to find your home/building?

My number is 864-2157. Please call me if you discover you won't be home for your appointment. You can also call Fire Chief Dan Barnett at 864-7277. In the meantime, I'll go ahead and send you a safety brochure along with a confirmation of our appointment.

Do you have any questions? Well then, I'll see you a week from Saturday."

The equipment needed for the visits was described in the previous section. Once a team completes visits to the assigned families, the assignment sheet can be turned in, and updated information can be entered into the database for future reference.

Publicity

Publicizing this project is important for three reasons. First, the people in the community need to be warned before strangers start calling them or knocking on their doors, offering to check their smoke detectors. Second, the businesses supporting the project deserve public recognition for their contributions. Finally, people should realize that your club is responsible for the entire project.

A sample news release a sample news release and a public service announcement for the project appear on pages 4 and 6 of this bulletin. These can be adapted for use by your club. In addition, a spokesperson for your club can contact radio and television stations and urge them to announce the project. The fire department makes an excellent background for publicity photos and announcements.

Follow-Up

Batteries should be checked once each year, so the contacts made during the first year of this project will be the basis for next year's project. Share the

information you have collected with local government officials on health and safety so that they can track what effect the project has on the level of safety in the community.

The club can also discuss with the local fire department whether the community's smoke detector ordinance needs to be strengthened. Information on smoke detector ordinances is available from the National SAFE KIDS Campaign.

Use flyers, ads, and press releases similar to the samples below and on page 6 to publicize the project. Teams should use the sample assignment sheet on the next page to keep track of their visits to homes.

Sample Print Public Service Announcement For Newspapers

We Want to Make You Safer!

A working smoke detector cuts in half the chances of dying in a fire.

That's why we're offering these FREE services. We want to visit your home to:

- Check the battery in your smoke detector
- Install a smoke detector if you don't have one.
- Tell you how to survive a fire in your home.

Members of the Kiwanis Club of Lytton and Fire Fighters Union Local 203 will be making home visits October 6-12. If you would like to set up an appointment, call 595-4230

Batteries and smoke detectors generously provided by:

Strachey's Hardware Edward Lumber Company Corso Drugs



This announcement provided as a public service.

Sample Pre-Canvass Flyer

FIRE SAFETY DAY FOR YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD IS NEXT SATURDAY!

- Free batteries for smoke detectors.
- Free smoke detectors for 25 families.
- Free expert installation.
- Free truck at 9th Street and Maryland.

Members of the Frankfort Fire Department and the Frankfort Sunrisers Kiwanis club will be in your neighborhood on Saturday, October 12, from 9:00 a.m. to noon.

Teams in red caps will be knocking on doors and offering to install new batteries or new smoke detectors. Please arrange to have someone at home to take advantage of this free service.

A fire truck will be parked at 9th and Maryland to attract children to special education activities from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Bring your children after you receive your new battery.

Read the attached brochure to learn more about the importance of this fire safety effort. If you have additional questions, please call 555-3482 or 778-2493 after 5:00 p.m.

Please let us visit your home to help protect you from fires.

Batteries generously provided by Big D Discount.
Smoke detectors provided by Homeland Lumber and the Frankfort Sunrisers Kiwanis Club.

All printing donated by Quicki Printer



Sample Assignment Sheet



Smoke Detector Battery Program

Team Members

Fire Fighter _____ **Phone** _____

Kiwanian _____ **Phone** _____

Assignment

Date _____

Test	Name/Address/Phone	Battery	Smoke Detector
1. _____	_____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____	_____

Comments on Visits

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

NEWS FROM THE KIWANIS CLUB OF FLORENCE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kiwanis Club of Florence
Contact: John Guelph
Phone: 555-9257

Sample News Release for Newspapers

BATTERY GIVE-AWAY PROTECTS LIVES

Some very odd couples will be visiting three neighborhoods of Florence next week to help protect residents from fires. Fire fighters in full gear and members of the Kiwanis Club of Florence (all wearing yellow shirts) will be going door-to-door offering to replace batteries in smoke detectors for free.

"Residential fires are the number one killer of children in this state," explains Kiwanis club president Bertrice Gibelline. "And studies have shown that a working smoke detector in a home reduces the chances of death in a fire by half."

That is why members of the fire department and the Kiwanis club asked Circle Department Store to donate 200 batteries to this project, and owner Joe Dante responded by donating twice that number. "I know a child who was once severely burned," comments Dante, "and I now how important this project is."

Teams of fire fighters and Kiwanians will canvass houses and apartments in the Paradise Hills area on Wednesday, October 9; in the area south of Paulo Boulevard on October 10; and the Francesca Commons neighborhood on Friday, October 11. The teams will knock on doors from 5:30 to 8:30 each night, and a fire truck will patrol the area with lights flashing to alert residents.

"It will be a bit uncomfortable doing this in fire gear, but it will educate a lot of children," says Fire Chief John Aligherie. Young children are sometimes scared of fire fighters, and this can hamper rescue efforts during a fire. The fire fighters hope to become friends that children will go to during a fire.

The Kiwanians and fire fighters hope to make this project an annual campaign to make sure every home in Florence has a working smoke detector.

SCRIPT NUMBER ONE

(30 seconds)

Each year in this country, 1,200 children die in fires. Ninety percent of these deaths occur in homes without a working smoke detector. . .and half the smoke detectors in homes need a new battery.

That's why the Kiwanis Club of Lakeland and the Lakeland Fire Department will be checking neighborhoods October 6, 7, and 9. At no charge, they will replace batteries in all smoke detectors and will install detectors upon request.

Watch for the teams in yellow vests in the Hillside, Wythe, and Park neighborhoods

SCRIPT NUMBER TWO

(15 seconds)

A smoke detector can't protect you if it doesn't work. That's why Johnson Hardware and Boswell Kiwanis club will install a free battery in your smoke detector. If you would like a battery or help installing a smoke detector, call Johnson Hardware at 441-5522.

Sample Radio/Television Script

RELEASE FROM LIABILITY

I understand and agree that the Kiwanis Club of _____ is providing burn injury prevention information and free smoke detectors as a public service in the interest of encouraging safety and helping to prevent fires. I understand that Kiwanis International, including its clubs and districts, does not guarantee or endorse this brand of smoke detector. I also understand that Kiwanis International, including its clubs and districts, is not a seller, manufacturer, or dealer in smoke detectors.

In exchange for accepting the free smoke detectors and the burn injury prevention program, I agree not to make any claim or demand or to file any lawsuit against Kiwanis International, its clubs and districts, or any individual connected with Kiwanis International or this smoke detector project, for any injuries, damages, costs, or expenses claimed to have resulted from the smoke detector or the education program.

I further understand that for these smoke detectors to be effective, batteries will need to be replaced on a regular basis and they will need to be installed correctly.

This release from liability is finding on me and my family and all my heirs and successors.

Date

Applicant Signature



**Service Programs Department
Kiwanis International
3636 Woodview Trace
Indianapolis, IN 46268**

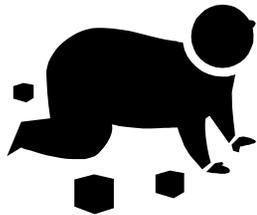
**Worldwide (317) 875-8755
North American (800) 549-2647
Fax (317) 879-0204
service@kiwanis.org
www.kiwanig.org**

Clear up misconceptions. The smoke is poisonous and the fire moves fast. Children may want to hide from the fire—and the fireman—rather than leave the burning house.

Plan two escape routes. If one route is blocked, the other can lead you to safety. Each route should end at the designated meeting place for the family, a safe distance from the house.

Learn the fire safety crawl. Stay low, where it's cool. Cover your mouth and nose with a cloth to block poisonous fumes. Touch doors to see if they are hot before opening. Don't stop to call the fire department or gather valuables.

Practice. Practice regularly at night, in the dark. Try both escape routes.



- Remember—Once you are out of the burning building, stay out. If someone is missing, tell a firefighter.



Developed for local Kiwanis clubs by
Kiwanis International
3636 Woodview Trace,
Indianapolis, IN 46268

Fire



**A
FAMILY
KILLER**

**A safety brochure
distributed by your local
Kiwanis club**

A Race for Your Life

Your house catches on fire in the middle of the night. Could you get your family out of the house in two minutes? That might be all the time you have before flames engulf your house.

That's why it's so important to have a working smoke detector and a plan for leaving your house. Getting out of the house a few seconds earlier could save your entire family.

Myths and Fires

A real home fire is nothing like the Hollywood version where the hero saves his family. In a real fire, the biggest danger isn't getting burned; three times as many people die from breathing poisonous smoke as from burns.

The smoke isn't white. It's black, choking, and so thick it can disorient you in your own home.

The air isn't breathable. Poison gases and a lack of oxygen make it difficult to breath.

Smoke doesn't wake you up. The carbon monoxide and other toxic gases kill people in their sleep.

Fire isn't orderly. Rooms become so hot that everything will burst into flames in a sudden flash.

Fire isn't slow. In just 30 seconds, a small flame can turn into a big fire. An entire house can be engulfed in just five minutes.

How to Survive

There are three simple steps you should take to prepare for a fire in your home:

- **Install smoke detectors.**

A working smoke detector cuts in half the chances of dying in a fire.

Place the first smoke detector in the hallway outside the bedrooms. Most fires occur between midnight and 6 a.m.

Put a smoke detector on every level of the home near the stairs. A

detector on every level provides up to three minutes to escape in most situations.

Install detectors on ceilings or high walls. Smoke rises, so place detectors high and close to the middle of the room, away from air vents.

- **Take care of your smoke detectors.**

A detector can't save your life if it doesn't work.

Test the battery once a month. Most have a test button you can push. Otherwise, read the manufacturer's directions.

Clean the detector. Dust and other dirt can lead to false alarms and other problems. Use a soft duster or a vacuum cleaner once a month.

Replace the battery. For maximum effectiveness, replace the battery at least once each year.

- **Prepare your family.**

Everyone needs to know what to do if a fire occurs. The safe response should be a reflex.



Practice escaping

Practice regularly, using the fire drills as an opportunity to test the smoke detectors. Alternate the exit used so the children learn both routes.

- Don't warn the children. See how they react, and keep practicing until their instinctive reaction is the safe one.
- Practice at night. That's when most residential fires happen. It's dark and the smoke makes it worse. Conduct the fire drill in the dark.



The information in this brochure was provided by the National SAFE KIDS Campaign, Washington, D.C.



Developed for local Kiwanis clubs by
Kiwaniis International
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Indianapolis, IN 46268

Protect Your Children



**Fires Kill
Children. . .
Don't Let
Yours
Become
Victims!**

Burns are the second leading cause of unintentional injury among children in this country. And more than 65 percent of the children who die are five years of age or younger.

The most important action to protect your children is to install at least one smoke detector in your home. But that's only half the job.

The second step is to educate them. Here are some tips:

Clear up the misconceptions

Many children hide in closets or under beds and think they are safe. Some try to put out the fire themselves. Others fear being blamed, so they don't tell adults until it is too late. Explain that none of those actions are safe.

The sounds of smoke detectors and sirens scare young children, and a fireman in full gear can look like a monster. Listen to the alarms together and visit the fire station to see how firemen dress.

Plan two escape routes

Work with your children to find two exits they can use by themselves and make sure they understand that:

- *They must learn to use the escape routes by themselves. You may not be able to lead them.*
- *The escape routes end at the designated meeting place. That is the safe place where the family will meet.*
- *They must stay at the designated meeting place. Never go back into a burning building.*

Learn the fire safety crawl

Explain the four parts of the fire safety crawl and why they should do them.

- *Crawl, keeping low to the floor. The coolest air is near the floor. Four feet up, the temperature can be 600 degrees Fahrenheit.*
- *Cover your nose and mouth. Clothing or a towel (preferably damp) will protect lungs from dangerous fumes.*
- *Go directly to the nearest exit. Taking time to call the fire department or collect valuables could trap you in the fire.*
- *Touch doors before opening. If the door is hot, the fire is on the other side, and shouldn't be opened*

