

November 22, 2006

## **GIVE THANKS AND CHECK SMOKE ALARMS**

BISMARCK – The Thanksgiving holiday is time for family, friends, and giving thanks. State Fire Marshal Ray Lambert reminds everyone to check their smoke alarms as they prepare their homes to receive family and friends.

The National Fire Protection Association estimates that although 90% of American homes are equipped with smoke alarms, more than half are not in working condition. “A working smoke alarm doubles your chance of surviving a house fire,” said Lambert. “There have been four fatal house fires this year, and in three of those homes there was no working smoke detector. The most common reason a smoke detector doesn’t work is that it doesn’t have a battery.”

Many homes have smoke alarms with 9-volt batteries that should be replaced at least twice a year. Other alarms long-life lithium batteries with a life span of up to 10 years. Even if the battery does not need to be replaced, for safety a smoke alarm should be tested on a regular basis. A “chirping” sound indicates the batteries are weak and should be replaced.

“Of course, the battery always seems to start chirping at bedtime or when the stores are closed. So make sure your family is always protected by keeping an extra smoke alarm battery in the house,” suggested Lambert. He offered the following fire safety tips:

- Install smoke alarms in your home if you do not currently have them. An alarm located between the sleeping area and the living area of your home offers a minimum amount of protection. For maximum protection, install an alarm in every room, on every level of your home.
- Smoke alarms lose sensitivity over time and should be replaced. The approximate lifespan of an alarm is 10 years.
- At least once a month, press the test button to check your alarm. If the alarm doesn’t sound, replace the batteries. If this doesn’t solve the problem, replace the unit. Keep in mind that 9-volt batteries should be changed at least twice a year.
- Periodically clean smoke alarms using a vacuum attachment. This removes dust that could interfere with the alarm’s proper operation.

###