

Fully Involved

## Check those batteries...

We are reminded that summers can't last forever as changing leaves, cold weather and darkness mark the beginning of fall. Ushered in with the change of season is a dramatic increase in the risk of home fire related incidents. Last year in the US there were 515,000 home fires that resulted in 2,900 deaths and over 14,000 injuries. It was this time last year when North Mason grieved the loss of two of its brightest stars due to a devastating house fire.

Injury and death attributed to fire is unacceptable and will not go unchallenged. As a community we have to recognize that fire prevention is so easy but so often overlooked. Two thirds of all home fires lacked a working smoke detector. These numbers are staggering and alarming, no pun intended. Most people go through their daily lives with little to no attention of the simple device that time again has saved lives.

At least twice a year smoke detector batteries are to be changed. Smoke detectors should be tested once a month using the test button. Candle, match or other smoke devices are not to be used to test your smoke detectors. Such testing will cause the smoke detectors to become defective.

A critical aspect on the use of smoke detectors is its location in the home. I have been in several homes where detectors have been placed in poor locations. This decreases the potential for early notification in the event of a fire. Smoke detectors should be placed in every bedroom and hallway. Detectors should be mounted either vertically or horizontally, at least six inches from where the wall meets at the highest point of the room. Smoke detectors should NOT be placed in garages, bathrooms, kitchens, or other "normal smoke/steam areas". This includes detector placement near wood stoves. How many of you have disabled kitchen smoke detectors following a false alarm and have forgotten to reconnect it? Yikes!!

It is also very important to teach young children what to do if the smoke alarm does sound. At the fire district false alarms are a chance for us to train and become proficient in our emergency response. Take the opportunity at home to use false alarms to practice getting your family out of the house and to a designated safe meeting place.

Smoke detectors are distributed though Fire District 2. Safety grants received by the district allow us to provide the detectors at no cost. Fire District staff can help install a smoke detector in a safe and proper location.

We are committed to the prevention of life and property to every one of our residents. Our goal is to put a significant dent into fire loss statistics. Two-thirds of homes with inoperable smoke detectors is unacceptable. When you are finished with this article please take 5 minutes to check the detectors in your home. Putting it off till later means it won't get done. 5 minutes may work to save the life of you or a loved one.

Information on this and other fire prevention items can be located on our web page at [www.mcfcd2.com](http://www.mcfcd2.com).

Question of the month...where was the first smoke detector invented and by whom. The first email received at [jhicks@mcfcd2.com](mailto:jhicks@mcfcd2.com) will receive a Starbucks Gift Card. Good luck.

Jeromy Hicks is currently Mason County Fire District 2's community outreach coordinator. With ten plus years of firefighting service including being a paramedic, fire prevention is his passion. Jeromy currently provides assistance with inspections, investigations, and education thought out Mason County. He can be reached at 360-275-6711 ext. 2.