

CHANGE YOUR CLOCK/CHANGE YOUR BATTERY

Many people have heard the expression "change your clock, change your battery." Traditionally, during Fire Prevention Week (or Fire Prevention Month) in many communities in the United States, people are urged to replace batteries in their smoke alarms. It's a good time of year to do that, when fire safety is top-of-mind.

The standard message regarding smoke alarm battery replacement is "change the battery in your smoke alarm once a year, or when the alarm makes a chirping sound, indicating low battery strength."

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), it is not necessary to change smoke alarm batteries more than once a year. Scientific, research-based data from these organizations verify that. Changing batteries in smoke alarms more often than once a year is simply not necessary. There are also concerns about polluting the environment by discarding batteries in the trash. Smoke alarms use very little current, and alkaline batteries last a very long time in them. Changing batteries once a year is sufficient.

It should also be acknowledged that there are not changes between Daylight Savings and Standard Time in three states (parts of Indiana, Arizona, and Hawaii), or in Puerto Rico, Guam, and American Samoa, so the message in question would not apply in these locations, anyway.

The catchy expression "change your clock / change your battery" has been used for many years. It also makes some sense in that people are going around doing a technical job such as changing clocks, they should consider change batteries in smoke alarms, too. However, no one can point to a scientific, research-based reason why the recommendation "change your clock/change your battery" is still made.

it is okay to tell people "change your clock / change your battery". There is no reason to change what an organization is saying if this is what all agencies in the community are saying. If, however, inconsistency in local messaging is discovered or there are opportunities to get together with educators in the community to discuss the issue and arrive at consensus, that is a good idea, so consistency of local messaging is achieved by all organizations which community with the public.