## Norfolk Insider

City of Norfolk, NE

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## "Red Cross Partners with Norfolk Fire Reserves to Distribute Free Smoke Alarms"

Too many people don't have working smoke alarms in their homes. Members of the American Red Cross and the City of Norfolk Fire Reserves are teaming up to distribute and install smoke alarms in Norfolk homes on April 18. The volunteers will be walking in neighborhoods between Norfolk Avenue and Pasewalk Avenue that Saturday morning.

"Smoke alarms properly installed and maintained along with a home escape plan that is practiced at least



Darren Lindgren, President of the Norfolk Fire Reserves, discusses the April 18 smoke alarm distribution with Heather Claussen, American Red Cross volunteer and Terry Zwiebel, Norfolk Fire Marshal.

twice a year will greatly improve the chances of everyone getting out of your home safely in the event of a fire," said Terry Zwiebel, Norfolk Fire Marshal.

Firefighters and American Red Cross volunteers see the effects of home fires far too often.

"A home fire is the biggest disaster threat to Norfolk families – more of a risk than floods or tornadoes. The American Red Cross responds to a disaster every eight minutes and nearly all of these are home fires," said Loren Knauss, Executive Director of the American Red Cross in Eastern Nebraska.

The American Red Cross Home Fire Project was organized so that Red Cross volunteers could partner with a local organization to walk home to home in selected neighborhoods in a community, install smoke alarms and help the occupants create fire escape plans.

"Volunteers work one-on-one with families to create home fire escape plans ensuring everyone knows what to do if there is a fire in a home," Knauss said.

Danielle and Chris White of Belleville, Kansas, approached the American Red Cross wanting to help educate people of the necessity of having working smoke alarms. On February 23, 2015 they lost a son in a home fire. With the help of the American Red Cross, a video was produced telling their story and explaining the Home Fire Project. (The video can be viewed at <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J9zmuqfOV40">www.youtube.com/watch?v=J9zmuqfOV40</a>).

To request a smoke alarm or for more information about fire safety, call 402-371-3093.

The Red Cross has launched a nationwide campaign to reduce the number of home fire deaths and injuries by 25 percent over the next five years. As part of the campaign the Red Cross is joining fire departments

and community groups nationwide to install smoke alarms in communities with high numbers of fires. The Red Cross also is asking every household in America to take the two simple steps that can save lives: checking their existing smoke alarms and practicing fire drills at home.

Fortunately, most home fires can be prevented. Homeowners should avoid using items that can be hazardous such as candles and space heaters – common items that can turn dangerous very quickly.

## To help avoid a fire in the home, there are steps someone can take now:

- Install smoke alarms on every level of the home and outside each sleeping area, placing them on the ceiling or high on the wall.
- Put a smoke alarm inside every bedroom.
- Test the smoke alarms regularly. Install new batteries every year.
- Get new smoke alarms every ten years.
- Keep items that can catch on fire at least three feet away from anything that gets hot, such as sources of heat or stoves.
- Never smoke in bed.
- Turn portable heaters off when leaving the room or going to sleep.

MAKE A PLAN You may only have two minutes to escape when a fire occurs, but most people mistakenly believe they have more than twice as long to get out. The Red Cross recommends that households develop a fire escape plan and practice it at least twice a year with everyone who lives in the home. People should know two ways to escape from every room and designate a safe place to meet outside the home in case of a fire. Discuss the plan with everyone in the household and practice until every member of your household – including children – can escape in less than two minutes.

People can also download the <u>Red Cross First Aid App</u> to get access to life-saving information on what to do for common, everyday first aid emergencies including burns. The app has a Spanish language toggle switch and can be downloaded by visiting <u>redcross.org/apps</u>.