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## MEDIA RELEASE

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### TIMELY REMINDER FROM WORLD EXPERTS TO CHANGE YOUR SMOKE ALARM BATTERY

The heads of fire services from around the world have joined South Australia's fire services in reminding households to change their smoke alarm batteries when they change their clocks at the end of daylight saving.

In conjunction with the World Police and Fire Games, fire and emergency services experts from across the globe have gathered in Adelaide for the International Emergency Management Conference and Exhibition and were pleased to participate in the launch of the 2007 *Change Your Clock, Change Your Smoke Alarm Battery* campaign.

SA Metropolitan Fire Service Chief Officer Grant Lupton said the advice of such experts could not be ignored.

"The advice is simple: only working smoke alarms save lives," Chief Officer Lupton said. "At the end of daylight saving on Sunday, 25<sup>th</sup> March, the State's fire services are asking everyone to change their clock, change their smoke alarm battery."

Chief Officer Lupton said the 2007 campaign would again focus on those groups most at risk: children under the age of five and people aged 65 or over. He said it was estimated that these age groups were twice as likely as the rest of the population to die in a residential fire.

"We know the elderly and children are at a higher risk," he said. "There is also evidence to show that the absence of smoke alarms can increase the possibility of a fatality in a fire by 60 per cent."

According to a report by the Australasian Fire Authorities Council, of the residential fire victims in Australia where age was reported, 22 per cent were aged 65 and older.

South Australia's fire services attend an average of 19 fires a week however many more are likely to go unreported.

"Nationally it is estimated that only 45 per cent of properties attended had smoke alarms, and of those 31 per cent were not functioning," Chief Officer Lupton said.

"Working smoke alarms provide an early warning signal and are the only way to ensure your family and home are protected."

The *Change Your Clock, Change Your Smoke Alarm Battery* campaign is supported by Duracell.

**ENDS**

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### **The “Top Ten” smoke alarm tips from South Australia’s fire services**

1. Test smoke alarms monthly by pressing the test button with a broom handle.
2. Vacuum smoke alarms six monthly to clean the vents.
3. Replace the battery in 9v battery powered smoke alarms annually with a long-lasting alkaline battery.
4. 240 volt or mains powered smoke alarms also have back-up batteries which could be 9 volt replaceable batteries, depending on the brand. 9v back-up batteries should also be replaced annually.
5. Smoke alarms are designed to protect you while you are sleeping. Install smoke alarms in positions that will wake all occupants in the home and give them time to evacuate – for example outside each sleeping area with additional smoke alarms installed inside bedrooms where doors are closed at night, and along evacuation routes if bedrooms are located upstairs. See [www.changeyourbattery.com.au](http://www.changeyourbattery.com.au) or your local fire service for further information on where to place smoke alarms in your home.
6. Avoid locating smoke alarms near cooking appliances and bathrooms as the smallest amount of smoke or steam can activate them.
7. A short, low beep every 60 seconds indicates the battery power is low and the battery needs replacing.
8. It is the responsibility of owners and landlords to install smoke alarms where required by legislation.
9. Special smoke alarms that have visual and vibrating indicators are available for people with a hearing impairment.
10. All types of smoke alarms have a limited life and should be replaced after 10 years. Smoke alarms can be purchased from department stores, hardware stores, electrical retailers and fire protection companies. They must comply with Australian Standard 3786-1993.