

# Missouri Arkansas Red Cross Region Is Top In Nation In Home Fire Responses, Smoke Alarm Installations And Education

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ST. LOUIS - In the first three months of 2021, Americans faced 16% more home fires than they did during the same period in 2020. As the nation's most frequent disaster, home fires have remained a constant threat during the COVID-19 pandemic as people have spent more time at home. From this past January to March, the Red Cross responded to nearly 17,000 home fires affecting more than 70,000 people across the country — an increase of 2,300 fires affecting nearly 9,000 more people than the same time last year.

Locally, the Missouri-Arkansas Region has experienced a similar increase year over year. From January to March 2021, the Missouri-Arkansas Region responded to more than 1,100 home fires affecting close to 4,000 people – an increase of over 230 fires affecting more than 570 people than the same time last year.

“The Missouri and Arkansas Red Cross Region leads the nation in the number of home fires we respond to, which ensures those affected by fires have our support after a fire,” said Chris Harmon, Regional Disaster Officer. “This doesn’t mean we have more fires in our region, but it does mean through our partnerships with fire departments and with the help of our many volunteers, Missouri-Arkansas Red Cross has the highest response rate in the nation following home fires.”

This spring, Red Cross volunteers and community partners are working together through a national Sound the Alarm effort to educate 100,000 people in at-risk communities about home fire safety.

“With the help of our fire department partners, the Missouri and Arkansas Red Cross Region has installed more smoke alarms in homes and educated more individuals on fire safety than any other Red Cross region in the nation, all as part of our 2021 Sound the

Alarm campaign,” said Harmon said. “Since April 1, we have made nearly 800 homes safer with smoke alarm installations and provided fire safety education to more than 2,100 people.”

This annual Sound the Alarm initiative is a key part of the Red Cross Home Fire Campaign, which has saved at least 864 lives since launching in 2014, 29 of those lives saved were in the state of Missouri. To learn more and to pledge to prepare your family against home fires, visit [SoundTheAlarm.org](https://www.redcross.org/soundthealarm).

This work is made possible thanks to generous financial donations from national partners: Delta Air Lines and Lowe’s.

**TWO MINUTES TO ESCAPE** Most of us don’t realize we have as little as two minutes to escape a burning home before it’s too late, according to a [2020 Red Cross survey](#). Follow these steps to help protect your family:

- Create an escape plan with at least two ways to exit every room in your home.
- Practice your plan until everyone in your household can get out in less than two minutes.
- Place smoke alarms on each level of your home, including inside and outside bedrooms and sleeping areas. Change the batteries at least once a year if your model requires it.
- Check the manufacturer’s date of your smoke alarms. If they’re 10 years or older, they likely need to be replaced. Follow your alarm’s manufacturer instructions.