

Saved by the Smoke Alarm St. Croix Sleep Safe Program

American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) children are at high risk of death due to house fires. Residential fires are the third leading cause of death for AI/AN children ages 1-4. Smoke alarms nearly double the chances of surviving a house fire, yet many reservation homes do not have adequate numbers of working smoke alarms. The Sleep Safe Program was created as a partnership between the Indian Health Service, US Fire Administration and Head Start to provide education and to install photoelectric smoke alarms in the homes of Head Start students.

Smoke Alarms Alert Family to House Fire. The St. Croix Head Start serves students in eight communities in Wisconsin. They have participated in the Sleep Safe Program for five years, installing over 200 smoke alarms in tribal homes with Head Start children. Janet Nelson, the St. Croix Head Start Health Coordinator, sent in the following story about Sleep Safe smoke alarms alerting a family to a house fire.



Janet Nelson installing
a smoke alarm

During the early morning hours of February 24, 2005 while waiting for their food to get done cooking, a family fell asleep. During the time they were sleeping, a frying pan caught on fire. The flames grew, eventually igniting the kitchen cupboards. Two smoke alarms kept going off until finally one of the adults awoke and then smelled and saw the smoke and flames. They were able to put the fire out by throwing the pan outside and using towels to put out the rest of the fire. St. Croix Sleep Safe Program partners—Head Start and Honoring our Children—had installed the smoke alarms during 2004.

For more information about the Sleep Safe Program visit
<http://www.ihs.gov/MedicalPrograms/InjuryPrevention/index.cfm>