

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 22, 2013

Media Contacts:
Kaylene Waindle
[207-615-4187](tel:207-615-4187) (cell)
kwaindle@smccme.edu
Steve Willis
[207-741-5808](tel:207-741-5808) swillis@smccme.edu

SMCC Fire Science & Local Fire Departments Launch Program Today to Provide Mainers with Free Smoke Alarms & Carbon Monoxide Detectors and Fire Safety Support

SOUTH PORTLAND – Southern Maine Community College, in collaboration with the Scarborough & Falmouth Fire Departments, the Maine Fire Marshal’s Office, and the Maine Center on Deafness (MCD), recently received a \$286,368.00 Federal Fire Prevention & Safety grant designed to improve fire safety for Maine families. The group will use the funds to kick off a one-year campaign, starting **today**, to offer home fire safety checks and provide and install thousands of free smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) alarms in the homes of high-risk citizens in southern Maine.

“We are targeting older homes and those with young, elderly, and deaf or hearing-impaired family members,” said Steve Willis, Faculty Chair of the Fire Science program at SMCC. “We want people to know the keys to fire safety, which are prevention, preparation and escape. With this program we hope to help as many people as possible become more aware, more prepared, and as safe as possible.”

Homeowners in southern Maine who want to take advantage of the new program should call [207-730-4298](tel:207-730-4298). Assistance will be provided on a first come first serve basis.

For those who request assistance, Fire department or MCD professionals will plan a visit to the home to provide a fire safety check including: checking smoke detectors and CO alarms, replacing existing alarm batteries with special 10-year life lithium batteries, installing free state-of-the-art smoke and carbon monoxide alarms to ensure coverage in each bedroom and at each level of the home, and providing information and guidance designed to ensure everyone’s safety. For homes with family members who may be deaf or hard of hearing, the group will also install special tactile alerting devices, called “bed shakers.”

A recent survey by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) found that while 96% of homes in the US have smoke detectors, nearly half of them did not work. With changes in furnishings and other materials, they also found that fires now spread much more quickly. They estimate that escape time from a home fire has decreased from 17 minutes in 1975, to just 3 minutes today. In Maine, between 2002 and 2011, 160 people died in fires, with 90% of those deaths occurring in the home and most during sleeping hours. The new program hopes to change these statistics.

For more information, please contact Steve Willis swillis@smccme.edu or [207-741-5808](tel:207-741-5808).

With more than 7,500 students, Southern Maine Community College (SMCC) is Maine’s largest, oldest and most diverse community college. SMCC was founded in 1946 and serves students throughout Southern Maine through its South Portland and Midcoast Campuses, 10 satellite locations and online offerings. The College has the lowest tuition and fees in New England and offers more than 45 degree programs, ranging from Business to Construction Technology, Culinary Arts to Biological Sciences. SMCC empowers students to respond to a changing world and enhances economic and cultural development in Southern Maine by providing a variety of educational opportunities and partnerships.