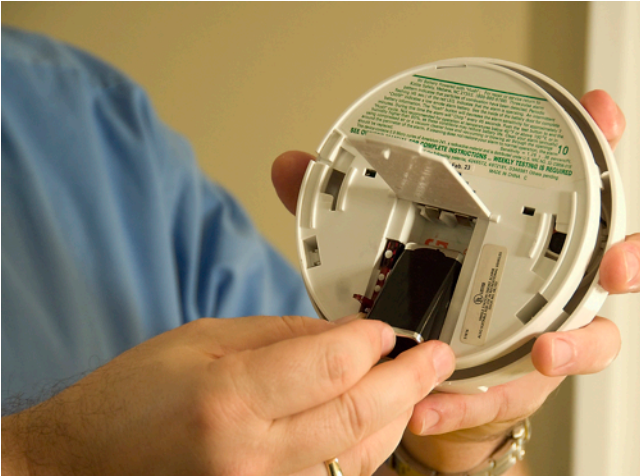


S A F E T Y N O T E S

March 2014



CHECK YOUR CLOCKS & YOUR DETECTORS

Smoke detectors have only been available on the mass market for about 40 years. Initially, the push was to get even one detector into every home in the United States.

Despite the gradual increase in the number of residential detectors, there was a continuing problem with dead or missing batteries in smoke detectors that were not directly tied into the electrical system.

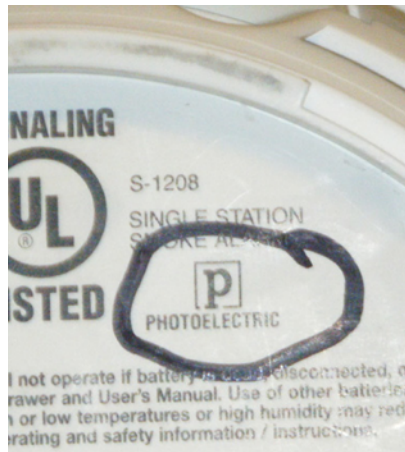
Then about 25 years ago, the Energizer Battery company teamed up with the International Association of Fire Chiefs to launch the “Change Your Clock/Change Your Battery®” campaign, encouraging every head of household to put a fresh 9-volt battery in their smoke detector whenever they adjusted their clock for Daylight Savings.

It is estimated by the “CYC/CYB” campaign that there are still about 23 million homes without working smoke detectors in the U.S. Persons who rent have the added advantage of landlords and managers who recognize the critical importance of smoke detector protection in their properties.

This March 9th, when you “spring forward” with the clocks, please do more than repeat the slogan of “Change Your Clock/ Change Your Battery. Conduct a review of the detectors in your apartments and rental homes that reflects changes in smoke detector technology as well as the continuing education needs of many renters.

- Smoke detectors don’t last forever. Battery operated smoke detectors must be replaced every 10 years. The date of manufacture is on the back label of the device.
- If your detectors are part of an automatic fire alarm system, they must undergo operational testing every year as well as a “sensitivity” test at least every five years. If they pass both the operational and sensitivity tests, they do not need to be replaced because of age.

- A single station, battery-operated detector may still “beep” after 10 years. But that only means the battery is connected to the horn. It does not mean the detector itself has the capacity to respond to an actual fire.
- Determine whether you have ionization or photoelectric detectors by looking at the labeling on the back of the unit. If you cannot find the word “ionization” but you find “Caution! Contains small amount of radioactive material”, you know it is an ionization detector.



Example of photoelectric detector labels.

- Be aware that ionization detectors may not respond adequately in a smoldering type of fire. Photoelectric detectors can alarm 10 to 40 minutes faster than ionization detectors in fires ignited by smoking materials or faulty wiring. As you replace older ionization devices, consider installing photoelectric or dual sensor photo/ion detectors for better protection. Notice that current packaging for battery operated detectors recommends both ionization and photoelectric detectors.
- When replacing single station detectors (that are screwed into the ceiling rather than tied into the electrical system), consider devices with long-lasting lithium batteries that are sealed into the alarm. Then you won't have to worry about tenants removing batteries or failing to replace dead batteries.
- Have enough detectors for the size and shape of the apartment or house. You need at least one detector on each level of the home and one detector outside the sleeping units.
- It is wise to also have smoke detectors in each bedroom since hardwired and interconnected detectors would now be required with a new building.
- Advise your tenants that according to RCW 48.44.110 they can be fined up to \$200 for failing to keep their smoke detectors operational. Two of every three fire deaths nationally in 2012 occurred in homes not protected by a working smoke detector.
- Recognize that some tenants remove batteries from smoke detectors because the ionization units cause frequent nuisance alarms and are located within 20 feet of the kitchen stove. Costs involved in replacing the ionization detector with a photoelectric (i.e about \$15) alarm and relocating it several feet are insignificant in comparison to recovery costs from any major fire.
- Replace detectors that have been painted over during a remodel.
- Recognize that some detectors less than 10 years old can still fail. If you put in a new battery and the system continues to beep a warning sound, you need to replace the unit. Smoke detectors as a whole average a three percent failure rate per year. At 10 years of age they have an accrued 30% failure rate.

You can sign up for this monthly newsletter, ask a fire-related question or suggest a specific safety topic by contacting Jan Doherty at jdoherty@spokanefire.org or by calling 509.625.7058.



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