

## S A F E T Y N O T E S

October, 2014



**Working Smoke Alarms Save Lives**

**Test Yours Every Month!**

Fire Prevention Week • October 5–11, 2014 • Go to [FPW.org](http://FPW.org)



If you are ever on “Jeopardy” and the answer is “longest running public health and safety observance in U.S.”, you will know the question is “What is National Fire Prevention Week?” As a nation, we remember the Great Chicago Fire of October 9, 1871 and work to improve fire and building codes that contributed to the death of 250 persons, destroyed more than 17,400 structures and left 100,000 persons homeless.

Each year the National Fire Protection Association designates a theme to encourage Americans to look at the fire safety issues in their own home and workplace. This year the theme is “Working smoke alarms save lives: Test yours every month!” This message is important since two of every three persons who died in a home fire last year were living in a space that lacked a working smoke detector. In many cases this meant the battery was dead or missing. With over 2,700 lives lost in residential fires, the numbers reflect a basic failure to act on the knowledge that working smoke detectors require everyone’s ongoing involvement in their own life safety.

Landlords face several challenges in keeping the smoke detectors in all of their units up-to-date. If the alarm system in their units is a hardwired one that is monitored by a fire alarm service, residents shouldn’t be encouraged to test the alarms monthly because they could set off a false alarm for the building. However, even with a monitoring service involved, it is still important for the landlord or manager to know (1) how old the detectors are and (2) whether the detectors are ionization or photoelectric. You can determine the age of any detector by looking at the back label to find an exact date of manufacture. If you cannot find such a date, the unit is likely much older than ten years. If there are repeated problems with nuisance alarms near kitchen or shower areas, it is likely the detector is ionization. The problem can be solved by replacing the detector with a photoelectric version.

If the detectors in each unit are simply screwed into the ceiling or wall and are not connected to an automatic system, it would be smart to remind tenants with their rent notice that they need to test their smoke detectors and to let you know if there is a problem with any detector. It is particularly important for managers and maintenance personnel to also know the age of the detectors and their type, i.e. ionization or photoelectric. Ionization detectors contain small amounts of radioactive material and respond quickly to very tiny particles of smoke or steam. While they may sound an alarm 15 to 55 seconds faster than a photoelectric detector in a flaming type of fire, they are typically 20 to 40 minutes slower in a slow burning,

smoldering type of fire. In some smoldering fires, ionization detectors may not alarm at all. Photoelectric detectors contain an extra light beam that, when scattered by larger particles of smoke, causes the alarm to sound. There are also dual-sensor detectors on the market that contain both ionization and photoelectric technologies.

For further information on ionization and photoelectric smoke detectors, [check out this video](#) .



Scan this QR code to view the Video

October, National Fire Prevention Month, is the perfect time to check on the condition of the detectors in your care. If the units require alkaline batteries, it is a good time to replace them. If you are in the process of replacing older or problem smoke detectors, consider purchasing photoelectric or dual-sensor detectors that have long-lasting lithium batteries. Many detectors on the market now have built-in lithium batteries that should last the life of the detector. No matter the type, it is still a good idea to make sure the batteries are working by conducting that monthly test of each unit!

## Kiddie Smoke Alarm Recall



If you have 3 models of Kidde residential hard-wired ionization smoke or combination smoke/carbon monoxide alarms (i.e. Model i12010S, i12010SCO or KN-COSM-1BA), you need to know there is a recall of the product by the Consumer Product Safety Commission. Kidde will replace the units at no charge. The manufacture dates are between 10/22/13 and 5/13/14. More than one million units were sold online and at Home Depot and other retailers. For more detail go to the September recalls at [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov) or Google Kidde smoke alarm recall.



Model i12010S



Model i12010SCO



Model KN-COSM-1BA

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](mailto:jdoherty@spokanefire.org) or by calling 509.625.7058.



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