

S A F E T Y

October, 2015

The graphic is set against a background of radiating lines. On the left, the NFPA logo is in the top left corner. Below it, the text reads "Hear the **BEEP** where you **SLEEP**". In the center is a circular image of Sparky the dog wearing a red hat with "sparky" written on it. To the right of Sparky is a white smoke alarm. On the far right, a blue box contains the text: "EVERY BEDROOM NEEDS A WORKING SMOKE ALARM." Below that, it says "FIRE PREVENTION WEEK OCTOBER 4-10, 2015" and "firepreventionweek.org". At the bottom right of the graphic, it says "Sparky® is a trademark of NFPA."

FIRE PREVENTION

As a nation we use this month to remember the Great Chicago Fire that resulted in the death of 250 persons, destroyed more than 17,400 structures and left 100,000 persons homeless on October 9, 1871. More than a remembrance, we work to improve the fire and building codes that can prevent further fire tragedies.

Each year the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) designates a theme to encourage Americans to look at the fire safety issues in their own homes. This year the theme is "Hear the BEEP where you SLEEP" because most deadly home fires occur between 11 PM and 7 AM, the hours when people are asleep.

This message is important since three of every five persons who died in a residential fire last year were living in a space that lacked a working smoke alarm. In some cases the batteries were dead or missing. In other incidents there were no alarms in the home or the ones installed were too old to still be functional.

With over 2,500 lives lost in residential fires in the U.S. each year, the numbers reflect a basic failure to act on the knowledge that working smoke alarms require everyone's ongoing involvement in basic life safety. More Americans die in home fires annually than in any other type of major disaster. We often don't notice it because the fire fatalities occur a few at a time in different parts of the country and we neglect to add the individual tragedies together.

Here is a quick smoke alarm quiz! Use the following numerals and words:

2 10 20 30 yes no maybe

1. How often do you have to replace smoke alarms?
2. How far away from a stove should you install an ionization smoke alarm?
3. Is it smart to remove batteries in an obvious “false alarm” from cooking steam?
4. How many smoke alarm technologies are currently on the market for residential use?
5. Do long-lasting, individually packaged lithium batteries last as long as those lithium batteries sealed into smoke alarms?
6. About how many days should pass before someone checks to see if the single station (screwed-in) smoke alarms are still working?
7. Do photoelectric smoke alarms respond significantly faster than ionization ones in smoldering fires, such as those started by cigarettes or bad wiring?

Answers!

1. *Every 10 years (or sooner if the unit continues to chirp after new batteries are installed).*
2. *New recommendations suggest 20 feet from a cooking surface.*
3. *No. It is better to have smoke alarms with “hush buttons” and to ask your tenants to tell you if they have lots of nuisance alarms from shower or cooking steam. If so, replace the likely ionization alarm with a photoelectric one to reduce false alerts.*
4. *2: ionization and photoelectric*
5. *Maybe. Some individual lithium batteries may not last a full ten years. Sealed-in lithium batteries should last ten years and discourage removal of alarm batteries for other purposes.*
6. *Test smoke alarms about every 30 days.*
7. *Yes. Some studies show photoelectric smoke alarms can sound the warning up to 40 minutes faster.*



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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