

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

January, 2016

### Kickstart 2016!

May this be a year of good health and happiness for all! We hope that New Year's Resolution #1 is this: every household in Spokane will be protected by enough working smoke detectors. For detectors to be considered reliably working alarms, whether battery-operated or hard-wired, they must be less than 10 years old. Every household must have at least one smoke detector on each level of the home, making sure the space outside sleeping areas and inside each bedroom is protected. There should be at least one photoelectric smoke detector on each level because photoelectric alarms will respond to smoldering fires up to 40 minutes faster than ionization alarms. Look on the back label to determine whether the detector is photoelectric, ionization or a combination of both technologies. Find the date of manufacture on that back label as well!



### Smoke Detector Update

Fire Departments do not endorse any particular brand of smoke, heat or carbon monoxide (CO) detector. However, they do encourage consumers to learn the basic features of these life-saving devices and to refer to their manufacturer's recommendations. Similar to any consumer product, there can be a wide range of prices for very similar devices. Small print commonly found on packaging and user's manuals can be more discouraging to read than informative. The following notes give additional information on (1) options for persons interested in testing for second-hand smoke or evidence of tobacco use in non-smoking residential units; (2) buyer-beware reminders of basic detector technology and prices; (3) replacement guidelines for CO detector life expectancy; and (4) a current heat detector recall.

1. When asked whether Spokane Fire Department knew of any detector calibrated to determine whether smoking actually occurred in a non-smoking building, we were inclined to say there wasn't such a device. However we searched the Internet and soon discovered there are actually a number of products currently on the market that are designed to help apartment managers (or school principals and hotel managers) track whether smoking materials were used in specific

rooms. If you are interested in finding out more about these devices, conduct a web search for “**cigarette smoke detectors**” and you will find a range of designs and prices that may meet your needs.

2. You may have heard the local news reports indicating someone in the Spokane area was going door-to-door identifying themselves as members of the Fire Department’s “safety team” and requesting permission to inspect smoke detectors and the household fire evacuation plan. Two individuals were interviewed by Spokane Police and Fire investigators. It was discovered that the purpose of the door-to-door inspections was to provide a pathway for sales of the Crossfire wireless smoke, heat and carbon monoxide detector system. **The Crossfire system** has UL- listed components and typically sells for at least ten times the cost of a stand-alone photoelectric smoke alarm, heat detector or carbon monoxide detector. The company claims their lithium manganese batteries will last at least 20 years. However, since codes from the National Fire Protection Association require that smoke detectors be replaced every 10 years, Crossfire offers to replace their smoke detector units every 10 years at the request of the original owner. This is similar to the guarantee of the MasterGuard photoelectric smoke detectors that were once sold in conjunction with free dinner presentations at local restaurants. Although MasterGuard photoelectric smoke alarms are no longer manufactured, they can still be serviced through Crossfire.
3. Carbon monoxide detectors have been required in every residential rental unit in Washington State since 1/1/13. It is important for landlords to track the date of installation and the manufacturer’s recommended replacement time for their individual units. One major supplier has a 5-year warranty on units manufactured prior to 2010 and 7-year warranty on units made since 2011. **Keep record of the dates of manufacture and the stated warranty on the CO detectors you install.**

4. Heat detectors are sometimes placed in areas where regular smoke detectors cannot function well because of environmental concerns such as excessive dust, moisture or temperature. Attics, garages, electrical closets and warehouses may be equipped with heat detectors. There are several types of heat detectors with prices ranging from \$20 to hundreds of dollars per unit. **On 10/29/15 Sure Signal Products recalled about 375,000 DeTech, MasterGuard, Responsive and Thermalink units that sold between January 2004 and July 2015 for \$300 to \$375 per unit.** Consumers will be provided with a free replacement fuse and video directions on replacing the fuse. For more information, go to <http://www.cpsc.gov/en/Recalls/2016/Sure-Signal-Products-Recalls-Heat-Activated-Fire-Alarms/>.



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