



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **FIRE PREVENTION WEEK ENCOURAGES SMOKE ALARM REPLACEMENT**

You know to change batteries in smoke alarms once a year and to test the devices once a month to ensure they are working.

But did you know that smoke alarms need to be replaced every ten years?

“If you press the test button on a device that is more than a decade old, the alarm may sound but it may no longer detect smoke,” said Public Fire and Life Safety Educator Krista Barton. “Over the years, as with many things, parts wear down and the alarms decrease in effectiveness. You can hope that they are doing their job, but why take that chance?”

Fire Prevention Week runs October 9 – 15 and this year the theme is “Don’t Wait – Check the Date! Replace Smoke Alarms Every 10 Years.” The goal is to get people to get to know their smoke alarms, so the devices can do their job and save lives.

“Smoke alarms are a key part of a home fire escape plan,” Barton said. “When there is a fire, smoke spreads fast. A working smoke alarm will activate in the initial stages of a fire so you can get outside quickly, and cut the risk of dying in a home fire by half.”

Smoke alarms can only save lives if they are working properly.

To find out how old a smoke alarm is, look at the date of manufacture on the back of the alarm. The alarm should be replaced 10 years from that date. Any smoke alarm that does not respond after a new battery has been installed should also be immediately replaced.

Those who live in rental housing must also have a working smoke alarm. Landlords and apartment managers are responsible for installing alarms and testing them to ensure they are in working order prior to tenant occupancy. The landlord is also required to keep smoke alarms in working condition.

To help everyone keep their alarms functioning properly, the Township of Langley Fire Department offers the following tips:

### **Smoke Alarms:**

- Install a smoke alarm on every level of the home, in every room where people sleep, and outside each sleeping area.
- Interconnect all smoke alarms throughout the home so when one sounds, they all sound. Make sure you can hear the sound of the smoke alarm.

- Smoke alarms can be battery operated in homes constructed before March 31, 1979. Homes constructed after March 1979 require smoke alarms to be permanently wired into the electrical system and interconnected. Smoke alarms can be interconnected electrically by a qualified electrician.
- There are two types of smoke alarms: ionization smoke alarms are more responsive to flaming fires and photoelectric smoke alarms are more responsive to smoldering fires.
- Choose a smoke alarm that has the label of a recognized testing laboratory.
- Install smoke alarms away from the kitchen to prevent nuisance alarms. They should be at least three meters (10 feet) from a cooking appliance.
- Make sure everyone in the home understands the sound of the smoke alarm and knows how to respond.
- Follow the manufacturer's cleaning instructions to keep smoke alarms functioning properly. The instructions are included in the package or can be found on the internet.

### **Carbon Monoxide Alarms:**

- Carbon monoxide (CO) is a gas you cannot see, taste, or smell. It is often called "the invisible killer." It is created when fossil fuels such as kerosene, gasoline, coal, natural gas, propane, methane, or wood do not burn completely.
- CO poisoning can result from malfunctioning or improperly vented furnaces or other heating appliances, portable generators, water heaters, clothes dryers, or cars left running in a garage.
- Exposure to CO can be fatal. Signs of carbon monoxide include headaches, nausea, and drowsiness.
- Install and maintain carbon monoxide alarms outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home.
- If the CO alarm sounds, get fresh air. Move outdoors, by an open window, or near an open door. Call the fire department from a fresh air location and stay there until help arrives.
- Test your CO alarm at least once a month by pressing the reset or test button. The alarm will sound four quick beeps followed by five seconds of silence.
- Replace the batteries annually and replace CO alarms every seven to 10 years.
- Know the difference between the sound of the carbon monoxide alarm and the smoke alarm and the low battery signal sounds for each.

For more information, call the Township of Langley Fire Department at 604.532.7500.