

October's Fire Prevention Week puts focus on replacing old smoke alarms

(CC) This fall, watch for firefighters out in your community sharing the basics of home safety at schools and special events during Fire Prevention Week. Created by the National Fire Protection Association, it underscores the importance of replacing smoke and carbon monoxide alarms that have exceeded their lifespan. Running from October 9 to 15, this year's theme is "Don't Wait! Check The Date."

"Smoke alarms double your family's chance of a safe escape, but to provide that critical early warning, they need to be installed in the correct locations and be in proper working order," says Carol Heller, a home safety specialist with Kidde Canada, the country's leading smoke and carbon monoxide alarm manufacturer.

This year's theme addresses one of the biggest consumer unknowns — that smoke and carbon monoxide alarms don't last forever. Some homeowners, especially those with hardwired smoke or combination smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, believe they never need to be replaced. This is a potentially a very dangerous oversight.

Heller points out that even if an alarm sounds when you push its "test" button, this only means the circuits are working and power is getting to the unit. It doesn't mean the alarm's sensors are operating at optimal sensitivity.

After being exposed to years of dust, cooking grime, pet fur, and other airborne contaminants, an alarm's sensors may deteriorate, possibly slowing the alarm's reaction time. That's why the NFPA recommends that if your smoke alarm is more than 10 years old or you can't remember its age, replace it immediately. This goes for both hardwired and battery powered alarms. For CO alarms, replace any made prior to 2009.

Latest-generation technology can help with remembering to replace alarms and eliminating another common annoyance — having to replace the batteries.

"Kidde's newest Worry-Free alarms have a sealed battery that lasts 10 years from installation and never needs to be changed for the life of the alarm," says Heller. "Worry-Free alarms will also beep to advise you when they are nearing the end of their 10-year lifespan and need to be replaced."

Regular alarms have stickers either displaying a replace by date or space to write in a replacement date yourself based on when it was purchased.

Find more information online at safeathome.ca/checkthedata.

371 words

*Editors, please credit Content Canada (CC) for this article