

## SMOKE ALARMS DON'T LAST FOREVER



We don't think much about our smoke alarms unless we're testing them or changing the batteries. They function quietly in the background 24 hours a day, checking the air for smoke. But like any other appliance, they wear out. If your television stops working, you notice. If a worn-out smoke alarm stops working, you may not find out until it's too late.

Smoke alarms are like any electronic device - they have a limited service life, after which they become increasingly prone to problems. Problems can range from complete failure to "sensitivity drift." Such a drift can mean an increase in nuisance alarms (if the sensitivity increases) or a decreased ability to respond to smoke (if sensitivity decreases). Your smoke alarms should be replaced as recommended by the smoke alarm manufacturer.

At a minimum, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) recommend that you replace your smoke alarms *every 10 years*. This goes for all smoke alarms including battery-powered alarms, hard-wired alarms, and alarms with 10-year batteries. Even if your smoke alarms seem to work properly when tested, they should still be replaced as recommended. While the test button may indicate whether or not the alarm is working, it does not assure that the sensitivity of the alarm is within an acceptable range. To help you remember when to replace your alarms, write the date you installed the alarm and the date the manufacturer recommends the alarm be replaced on the inside of the alarm or around the edge. Check this when you test your alarms and you won't have to guess when to replace it.

You should also replace the smoke alarms whenever you move to a different home unless you are absolutely certain the smoke alarms are brand-new. In most cases, you won't know how old the existing smoke alarms are, so replace them with new alarms and use fresh batteries. A smoke alarm should also be replaced if it gets wet or dirty, gets paint on it, or is otherwise contaminated. If you're in doubt about the age of any of your smoke alarms, replace them. And if you know someone living in a home 10 years or older, forward this to them. They may also have old smoke alarms which should be replaced. For more information about smoke alarms, visit <http://www.TestYourSmokeAlarms.com/smokealarms.htm>