UL 217 Smoke Alarm Talking Points

Research from FSRI demonstrates that fires in modern homes with synthetic furnishings can have an escape time of less than three minutes from the time the fire starts.

A fire from a large device with an unregulated lithium-ion battery, like an e-bike or e-scooter, can reduce that escape time to less than one minute.

- Smoke alarms give you and your loved ones the earliest warning possible that there is a fire, so you can get out of your home quickly and safely.
- Three out of five home fire deaths occur when there are no working smoke alarms.
- The best type of alarm is a working smoke alarm. Smoke alarms can differ in the sensors and technology used to detect smoke, and some produce different sounds to indicate when smoke has been detected, such as making a voice announcement.

The number one reason people disable smoke alarms is because smoke from cooking sets them off. Newer technology can better distinguish smoke from cooking and smoke from a life-threatening fire.

- New technology in smoke alarms has made them better at knowing the difference between common steam or smoke from cooking, and an actual, potentially life-threatening fire.
- Cooking nuisance alarms account for 73% of nuisance alarms, while a low battery chirp and steam account for only 8% and 2%, respectively.[1]
- While it is difficult to eliminate all nuisance alarms, the new generation of alarms will greatly reduce nuisance alarms due to cooking - the reason many people disable their smoke alarms - while still having increased sensitivity and overall performance.
- Many smoke alarms today are interconnected, meaning that when one smoke alarm sounds, they all sound. This can help reassure those concerned about hearing their alarm with a closed door.

To test your smoke alarm, find the smoke alarm's test button and press it. If working properly, you'll hear a very loud beep. If the sound is weak or there isn't a sound, it's time to replace your batteries, or the whole device.

- Smoke alarms should be tested at least twice per year.
- In addition, people can help themselves and their family be fire safe by:
  - Having and practicing an escape plan A, B, and C. Know what to do if you cannot escape.
  - Having working smoke alarms inside and outside every sleeping area, on every floor of your home, including the basement.
  - Closing the bedroom door before going to bed (Close Before You Doze) - A closed door can be an effective barrier against deadly levels of carbon monoxide, smoke and flames — and may give everyone more time to respond to a smoke alarm.

Installation

- Install smoke alarms in every sleeping room, outside each separate sleeping area, and on every level of the home including the basement.
- Smoke alarms should be installed at least 10 feet away from cooking appliances. Proper installation can prevent nuisance alarms.
- Smoke alarms should be installed high on walls or ceilings. Wall-mounted smoke alarms should be installed one foot away from the ceiling, and they shouldn't be placed near windows, doors, or ducts where drafts might interfere with their operation.
- Smoke alarms should be replaced according to the manufacturer's recommendations, which is usually every 10 years, or when they stop working — whichever comes first. If your smoke alarm is more than 10 years old, install new alarms and look for products that are third-party listed or certified.
- Install smoke alarms yourself or ask a friend or family member for help.