

Maintaining your smoke detector can save your life

In the event of a fire, you may have as little as two minutes to escape safely. A smoke alarm can sense smoke long before you can, but only if it's working well.

Ideally, you should have a smoke alarm on every level of your home near all sleeping areas and one in each bedroom, according to the National Fire Protection Association. Bedroom alarms are especially important if you sleep with those doors closed.

On levels without bedrooms, alarms should be installed in a hallway or central area, such as a living room or den. Don't put a smoke alarm in the kitchen or bathroom since smoke and heat from cooking and steam can trigger too many false alarms.

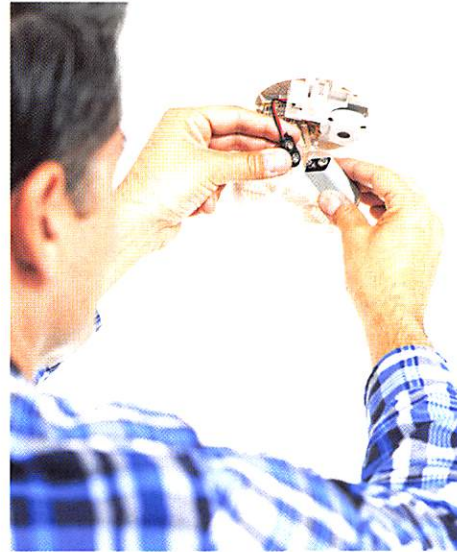
Because smoke rises, alarms should be mounted near the ceiling. Don't install smoke alarms near windows, doors or ducts where drafts can interfere with their operation.

Choose a smoke detector certified by an independent testing laboratory, such as UL. Have it installed by an electrician. If multiple smoke alarms are installed, they should be interconnected so when one beeps, they all beep.

Once installed, it's important to properly maintain the alarm. Test your smoke detector once a month.

Change batteries as needed, and install new detectors to replace old and outmoded models.

Push the test button on the device. A working smoke alarm may emit three short beeps or one long beep. To learn how your alarm test should sound, check the instruction manual



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or the directions on the back of the alarm.

Be sure everyone in the house knows what sound to expect in case of an actual fire.

If the alarm doesn't beep when tested, replace the batteries. Your device may

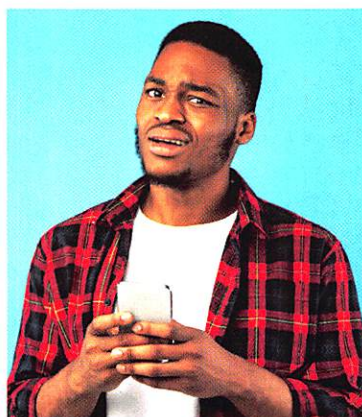
start chirping on its own when batteries are low. If it still chirps after replacing the batteries, you may need to replace that alarm.

Smoke detectors should last about 10 years. Don't just disable a device that doesn't seem to be working as it should. Replace it.

Caller ID spoofing: Don't fall for it

Caller ID is a helpful tool to avoid unwanted phone calls. Unfortunately, scammers found ways around this protection. They send a fake number to your caller ID display to hide the true identity of the caller. This is called spoofing.

Often the incoming call will appear to be coming from a local number or from a company or government agency you already know. If you answer, the scammer will be ready with a pitch to try to get you to reveal personal information. Scammers can use that to steal your money or commit other fraudulent activity.



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It is best not to answer calls from an unknown number. If you do answer, hang up as soon as you realize the caller is not someone you know.

If you answer and the caller or a recording asks you to hit a button to stop getting the calls, don't do it. Just hang up. The scammer is trying to determine if you're a potential target and will likely call back using a different spoofed number.

Do not answer any questions and never give out personal information such as account numbers, Social Security number,

mother's maiden name, passwords or other identifying information. Be especially cautious if you are pressured for information immediately.

If the caller claims to be with a company or government agency, hang up. To determine if the call was legitimate, phone the number for that company or agency that is printed on your written account statement, is listed in the phone book or appears on the government agency's website.

If you have a voice-mail account with your phone service, set a password for it. Some voice-mail services allow access to your voice mail if you call from your own phone number. A hacker can spoof your home phone number and gain access to your voice mail if you have not password protected it.