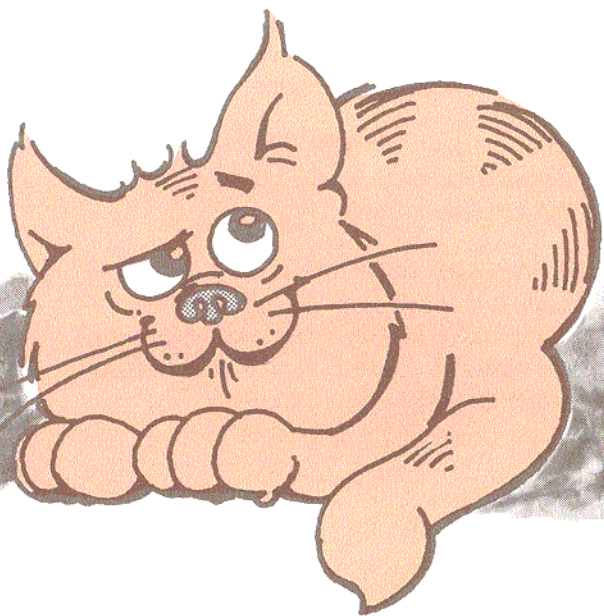


*a
sound
you can
live with:*

test your smoke alarm





A Sound You Can Live With

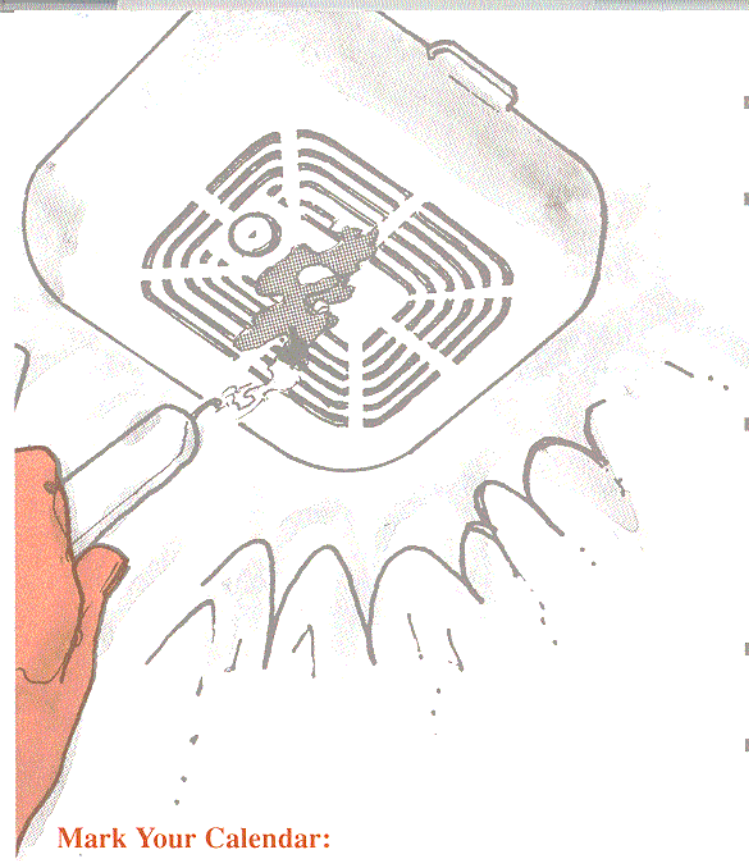
Smoke alarms save lives... but only if they are installed and are in working order. In Alberta, smoke alarms were not installed in 65 percent of rural – and 30 percent of urban – homes which had fires. Smoke alarms, just like any other electronic device, can wear out or fail to work. That is why regular testing to ensure they are working is important.

Statistics show that a working smoke alarm can mean the difference between life and death for your family. In Alberta, 65 percent of fire deaths occur in homes without smoke alarms or where smoke alarms did not work or activate during fires.

Properly installed, tested and maintained smoke alarms can alert you and your household in the early stages of a fire, when safe escape is still possible.

There are two types of smoke alarms-- photoelectric and ionization. Both types are suitable for home fire protection. They can be powered by batteries, household electricity or both.

The location of smoke alarms is also important; there should be at least one on every level. Fire presents the greatest threat at night when everyone is asleep. If your home has sleeping areas located on more than one floor, or separated by other rooms, a smoke alarm should be installed outside each sleeping area. Avoid locations near bathrooms, kitchens or ceiling fans.



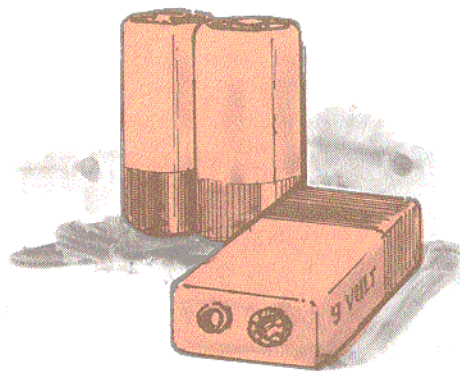
Mark Your Calendar: Testing

To ensure your smoke alarm is in top order **test it at least monthly**. Do it on the first day of the month, or on payday, or whatever day is best for you. Mark it on your calendar so you don't forget.

Things to remember while testing your alarm:

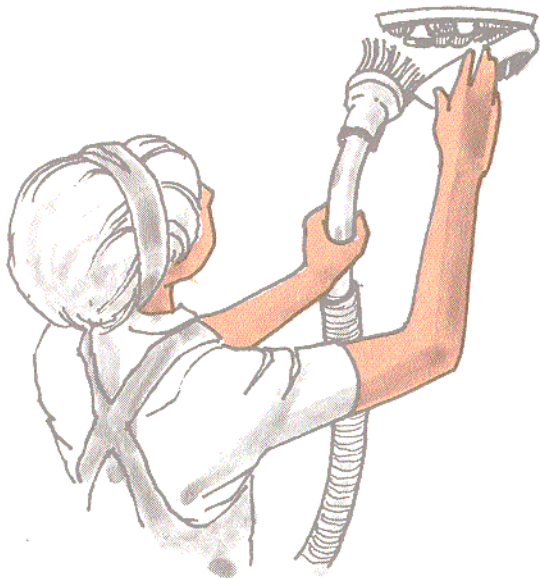
- When testing your alarm you are checking two things. You want to ensure that power is being transmitted to the alarm, and that it will activate in the presence of smoke.
- Test your smoke alarm according to the owner's manual or with the following procedure. Hold up a just-extinguished candle to the smoke alarm. The smoke should cause the alarm to sound within twenty seconds. Fan away the smoke to silence the alarm.

- Even the types of alarms that have a pilot light to indicate power is being transmitted should be tested regularly.
- Other models have a test button that activates the alarm. Test these monthly with smoke as well, because the test button may only tell you that the buzzer works, and not necessarily that the smoke-sensing mechanism is functioning.
- Battery-operated smoke alarms will make a chirping sound to let you know when batteries need replacing. **Generally, batteries need yearly replacement. Develop a safety habit by replacing smoke alarm batteries when you set your clocks back in the Fall.**
- When you've been away from home for a few days, check your alarm on your return to make sure it is working properly.
- In four out of 10 home fires, smoke alarms did not activate. Reasons are missing battery, dead battery or electricity disconnected.
- Replace non-working smoke alarms with new units immediately. The lifespan of the typical smoke alarm is about 10 years. However, some models will last as little as five years.



Mark Your Calendar: Cleaning

Keeping your alarm clean is also important. Dirt and dust inside can confuse the mechanism and lead to a false alarm or cause the alarm to malfunction.



Every six months, take a few minutes to clean out the alarm. Mark the times on your calendar at the beginning of the year.

Your owner's manual should contain detailed instructions for cleaning the alarm, but here are a few tips:

To clean the alarm, remove the cover and wipe it carefully inside and out with a damp cloth. Gently vacuum the interior of the alarm. Frequently, the alarm will sound while the unit is being cleaned.

Plan and Practice Your Fire Escape

When the alarm sounds, you don't have time to plan your escape. If you don't know instinctively what to do, there is a danger that you won't make it out safely, especially if the alarm awakens you out of a sound sleep.

Here are some tips for planning and practicing a fire escape for your home.

- Draw a floor plan of your home and prepare a fire escape plan with your family.
- Plan two ways out from every bedroom--usually a door and a window.
- Crawl low under smoke. Since the smoke and heat rise, the air near the floor will be cleaner.
- Close doors behind you to slow the spread of the fire.
- Get out and **stay out**. Set a meeting place, a safe distance from the building, so you can check that everyone in the household made it out safely. Call the fire department from a neighbour's home.

The Difference Between Life & Death

Smoke alarms are inexpensive. If you average their cost over the thousands of days of protection they provide, it works out to about half a cent per day. This is a minimum investment for a maximum return.

For further information contact:

Alberta Municipal Affairs
Fire Commissioner's Office
11-C, 10155 – 102 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4L4

Tel: (780) 427-8392

Call toll-free by dialing 310-0000 to
contact a RITE operator.

Your local fire department can also
provide information.

Visit the Alberta Municipal Affairs
website at: <http://www.gov.ab.ca/ma>



MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS
Fire Commissioner's Office