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SMOKE ALARMS: MAKE THEM WORK FOR YOU!

Latest U.S. smoke alarm data reinforces critical importance of detectors



MUSCATINE, Iowa – Newly released survey findings show nearly all U.S. households now have at least one smoke alarm, but 61 percent test them less often than recommended.

According to the latest "[Smoke Alarms in the U.S.](#)" report from the National Fire Protection Association® (NFPA®), working smoke alarms reduce the risk of dying in a home fire by more than half (60 percent), while the majority of civilian home fire deaths continues to occur in homes with no smoke alarms or no

working alarms. These statistics—coupled with newly released findings from a comprehensive U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) survey—reinforce the critical importance of Fire Prevention Week™, October 6–12, and this year's theme, "[Smoke alarms: Make them work for you!™](#)"

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"Smoke alarms can make a life-saving difference in a home fire, but they have to be working in order to protect people," said Lorraine Carli, vice president of Outreach and Advocacy at NFPA. "This year's Fire Prevention Week campaign drives home just how important it is to install, test, and maintain smoke alarms to ensure they're working properly."

A newly published survey by CPSC, which was conducted in coordination with the Fire Protection Research Foundation (the research affiliate of NFPA) and the National Institute for Safety and Technology (NIST), assesses the prevalence, functionality, and public perception of smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) alarms in U.S. households. According to the findings, nearly all U.S. households (99 percent) report having at least one smoke alarm, which reflects a significant increase from 88 percent in 1994. However, more than half of households (61 percent) test their smoke alarms less frequently than recommended (at least once a month). A third (33 percent) say they never test their smoke alarms.

In addition, the survey showed that many households have inaccurate perceptions about the age, functionality, and maintenance requirements of their smoke alarms. Nearly one in five households (16 percent) believed all alarms would be working but had at least one functionality issue when tested, including dead batteries. Additionally, only half (51 percent) of households were always accurate about the age of their alarms.

"People tend to be overconfident about their risk to fire, which often leads to a sense of complacency that compromises safety," said Carli. "This year's Fire Prevention Week campaign works to better educate people about their true risk to fire and the steps needed to make sure they're adequately protected in the event of one."

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Essential fire safety messages for this year's Fire Prevention Week theme, "Smoke alarms: Make them work for you!" include the following:

- Install smoke alarms in every bedroom, outside each separate sleeping area (like a hallway), and on each level (including the basement) of the home.
- Make sure smoke alarms meet the needs of all family members, including those with sensory or physical disabilities.
- Test smoke alarms at least once a month by pushing the test button.
- Replace all smoke alarms when they are 10 years old or don't respond when tested. To learn more about Fire Prevention Week and this year's theme, "Smoke alarms: Make them work for you!" visit fpw.org. Additional Fire Prevention Week resources for children, caregivers, and educators can be found at sparky.org and sparkyschoolhouse.org.

Listen to The NFPA Podcast, which takes a deeper dive into the CPSC survey findings and the state of smoke alarms in today's homes.

For more than 100 years, Fire Prevention Week—the longest-running U.S. public health observance on record—has worked to educate people about the risk of home fires and ways to minimize them. Local fire departments, schools, and community organizations play a key role in bringing Fire Prevention Week to life in their communities each year and spreading basic but critical fire safety messages.

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