

14. True for false: Smoke alarm knowledge

What do you REALLY know about smoke alarms?

Test your knowledge with this quiz

Questions: True or False?

1. I should replace my smoke alarm every 10 years.
2. A smoke alarm connected to household current is better than a battery-operated smoke alarm.
3. Ionization smoke alarms are better than photo-electric smoke alarms.
4. I will smell the smoke so I don't need a smoke alarm.
5. Most people who die in fires are burned.
6. I should test my smoke alarms monthly.
7. My smoke alarm goes off every time I make toast. I should disable it so it won't give nuisance alarms.
8. My family and I have about three minutes to get out of the house after the smoke alarm goes off.

Answers

1. I should replace my smoke alarm every 10 years.

True. Like all electronic equipment, smoke alarms have a defined life span. Smoke alarms generally have a life span of between seven and 10 years, depending on the specific manufacturer and model. To best determine how to care for your smoke alarm, read the manufacturer's instructions that came with your smoke alarm. Throughout the life of your alarm, test it every month to ensure it is functioning properly.

2. A smoke alarm connected to household current is better than a battery-operated smoke alarm.

False. Both types of smoke alarms in Canada must be tested to the same standard and listed by an accredited testing organization such as Underwriters Laboratories of Canada, therefore both types are equally effective. However, both types of smoke alarms should be tested monthly. You will need to change the batteries in battery-operated smoke alarms at least once per year, or, to save money in the long run and have greater peace of mind, purchase a replacement with 10-year batteries permanently installed.

3. Ionization smoke alarms are better than photo-electric smoke alarms.

False. Both types of smoke alarms are tested and listed by an accredited testing organization such as Underwriters Laboratories of Canada as life safety devices to the same standard, and are equally safe. Photo-electric smoke alarms may be more appropriate and less likely to create a nuisance alarm in locations close to a kitchen.

4. I will smell the smoke so I don't need a smoke alarm.

False. One side effect of fires is the generation of carbon monoxide in smoke. Carbon monoxide will aid in the deepening of sleep and will affect the ability of your senses to function properly.

Each house should have smoke alarms on every level, outside all sleeping areas and in each bedroom.

5. Most people who die in fires are burned.

False. Most people who die from home fires die from breathing the smoke and toxic gases from the fire, not from being burned by flames. These poisonous gases, including carbon monoxide, can render a person confused and disoriented or even unconscious after only a few breaths. These toxic gases may overcome you long before you have time to orient yourself to get out of your own home. If you are asleep and breathe poisonous gases, you may not wake up in time to escape. Smoke alarms are your best chance of being alerted to a house fire early enough to escape.

6. I should test my smoke alarms monthly.

True. This is the only way to make sure that they are in working condition. Only working smoke alarms can protect your family from fire. If you have battery-operated alarms, replace the batteries according to the manufacturer's instructions. Usually the battery will last approximately one year before needing replacement. Better choices for long-term reliability would be to replace a battery operated smoke alarm with one directly connected to an electrical circuit or one with a non-replaceable 10-year battery.

7. My smoke alarm goes off every time I make toast. I should disable it so it won't give nuisance alarms.

False. You need smoke alarms on every floor of your home, outside all sleeping areas and preferably in each bedroom. If your smoke alarms give nuisance alarms, try the following:

- Relocate the existing smoke alarm a short distance away.
- Gently vacuum the outside of the unit, following manufacturer's directions.
- Clean your toaster regularly to remove crumbs which can produce smoke when the heat is on.
- Replace the smoke alarm with a new one. You can purchase one with a "hush" feature. You could also replace an ionization smoke alarm in the kitchen with a photoelectric model.

8. My family and I have about three minutes to get out of the house after the smoke alarm goes off.

True. Studies have shown that you generally have about three minutes to escape from your home in the event of a fire. This is why it is so important to establish an escape plan for everyone in the family and to practise home fire drills.