

Smoke Alarms and Sleeping Children

Will the sound of a smoke alarm wake your sleeping child? There have been many articles this past year concerning children sleeping through the sound of a smoke alarm. A fire doubles in size every second and once the smoke alarm activates you have approximately 2 minutes to escape safely.

A typical smoke alarm puts out about 85 decibels; studies indicate that at least 110 decibels are needed to wake a sleeping child. Additional studies indicate that the sound of a voice, especially a family member may be more effective in waking a sleeping child.

Although these studies may not have followed scientific methodology and conclusions may be tainted, it is generally agreed upon that reliance on the sound of the smoke alarm alone may jeopardize the chance of family members from safely escaping a burning building. In addition to properly placed smoke alarms a "Fire Escape Plan" needs to be developed and practiced.

Your Fire Escape Plan should include:

- An agreement on who will wake up any children who might not respond to a smoke alarm,
- A drawing of your home that shows where the smoke alarms are and two ways to get out of each living area,
- A meeting place outside your home where all family members will get together in case of a fire.

Home fire drills should be practiced at least twice a year and it is important to activate the smoke alarm so that children will get accustomed to the sound and recognize that they need to evacuate the home immediately.

Additional steps you can take to fight against home fires:

- Change your smoke alarm battery annually,
- Replace smoke alarms every ten years,
- Interconnect smoke alarms, when one activates they all activate,
- Install smoke alarms in each bedroom as well as each hallway serving bedrooms and smoke alarms at each level,
- Install sprinkler systems.

The National Fire Protection Association and U.S. Fire Administration as well as the Consumer Products Safety Commission and Underwriters Laboratories are conducting studies to determine the effectiveness of smoke alarms in waking sleeping children. Until these studies are complete all of these organizations agree that the best chance your family has to safely escape a burning building is to have properly placed smoke detectors, fresh batteries, and a fire escape plan.

Remember...
...Change Your Clock, Change Your Battery...

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