

February 1, 2019

Dear Homeowner / Resident:

Our records show that your home turned ten years old recently or will within this year. We know that most people are unaware that their hard-wired smoke and carbon monoxide alarms only last for 10 years so we are sending you this letter with all the information you need to ensure you and your family are protected with working, in-date alarms.

You can replace hard-wired detectors yourself; if you can reach them **and** if you have sufficient skill to replace a light fixture. Be sure to first turn off electricity at the breaker box. Otherwise, you can hire an electrician or an alarm service company to do the job. There are some great tutorial videos on YouTube showing you exactly how to replace your alarms (<https://youtu.be/NGGCFIV4dmk>).

**Things to consider when replacing a hard-wired smoke alarm:**

Your alarms are interconnected. The basic function is that when one alarm is activated (for example in the basement) all the other alarms throughout the home (such as the main floor and bedroom levels) will also go into alarm to provide earlier warning to someone that may be sleeping on a level which is remote from the fire.

It is important that you maintain this feature when replacing the alarms. If you are doing the job yourself be sure to test all alarms for the interconnection by pushing the test button on each alarm and having someone stand near the other alarms to ensure they are working.

The Ontario Fire Code also requires that if you are replacing hard-wired alarms you must replace them with a hard-wired alarm. The code requires that when replacing smoke alarms in a home you may not *"reduce the level of protection provided in the building as required by the building code at the time of construction"*. This means you can't take down a hard-wired alarm and put up a battery operated one in its place.

When replacing hard-wired alarms, it is a good idea to consider some newer features that are available today which may not have been available when the homes were built, or that the builder chose not to spend the extra money on. One good feature is a built-in battery backup. This ensures continuous protection, even during loss of electrical power. Another feature would be a "hush" feature which allows you to silence the alarm by pushing a button if it has been activated by small amounts of steam or cooking smoke. The alarm would silence for 10 minutes and then reset itself. Unfortunately, this feature does not work if the smoke or steam is very heavy or if it increases after you have silenced it. The silence feature only reduces the sensitivity of the alarm by about 50%, but it does not "turn off" the alarm.

One last thing to consider is if you have areas that are prone to false alarms, such as near kitchens or bathrooms, you should consider an alarm that uses photo-electric detection. This is less sensitive to steam and cooking smoke but it is also slightly more responsive to smoke produced by a smoldering fire.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Barrie Fire & Emergency Service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Samantha Hoffmann".

Samantha Hoffmann  
Public Fire & Life Safety Officer