

Burnt Toast And Tragedy: 64 Million Households Could Be At Risk

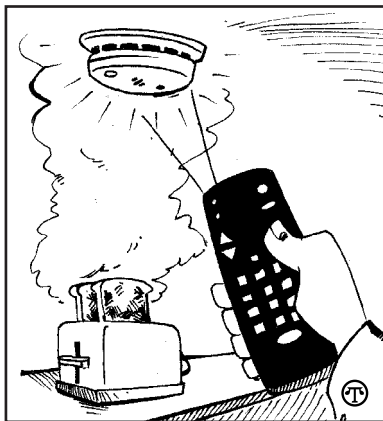
(NAPSA)—Ever burn your toast? Ever had your smoke alarm go off as a result? And now the question that's harder to answer: ever yanked the batteries out to quiet that screeching noise? If this sounds even remotely familiar, read on. There's new technology available now that could save your family's lives.

Life's irritations can include nuisance or "false" alarms caused when cooking smoke or shower steam send your smoke alarm into full alert. In fact, a recent national survey confirms that 64 million households experience nuisance activations, largely from cooking related events.

For many, the solution is to remove the batteries, which human nature tends to conclude, is not a problem because home fires always happen to someone else. It would never happen to you, right?

Wrong. There's a residential fire every two hours, 24/7, in this country, according to the Centers for Disease Control. Everyday, fire fighters walk into burnt-out homes to carry out the victims only to find smoke alarms that didn't alarm because they could not—the batteries were dead or missing. The National Fire Protection Association estimates that 22 million households today have inoperable smoke alarms. Combine that with the five million homes that have no alarm at all and you rapidly start to grasp why home fires kill or injure over 20,000 people every year.

What's wrong with this picture? These deaths could have been prevented.



The NFPA reports that an operable smoke alarm can improve your chances of survival by 50 percent. "The nuisance alarm issue has been around since these life-safety devices were first made widely available over 30 years ago," says Bill Webb, executive director of the Congressional Fire Services Institute. "Despite the success we've had recently in educating the public to use smoke alarms, many still feel compelled to disarm the units when cooking smoke or shower steam causes them to go off. The end result can be deadly," he said.

New technology may save more lives

What if there was a "smart" smoke alarm, one that could reduce the chances of activating in the presence of cooking smoke, but savvy enough to immediately recognize a real fire emergency? And, here's the best part, what if such an alarm was also affordable, and drastically easier to silence or test?

Perhaps the most significant advancement since the advent of

the smoke alarm, First Alert, inventor of the first battery operated smoke alarm, has developed the first smart alarm that can be silenced or tested simply by pushing any button on a household remote control device.

What's more, engineers have figured out a way to use microchip technology that helps the alarm "think" about the smoke it sees. "Smoke consists of large or small particles," reports Mark Devine, head of engineering at First Alert. "Cooking smoke has a different signature than a real home fire where smoke concentrations are rapidly building. This new alarm can differentiate between rapidly building smoke sources from a real fire as opposed to a dissipating smoke scenario from a cooking event.

The end game for consumers is simple: burn your toast—if the alarm goes off, just point and click. The result is virtually no temptation to do the wrong thing and remove the batteries. Test the alarm? Again, point and click. No more ladders or stools to reach the test button. Many in the fire services community believe this new technology will do one more thing—save more lives.

Company officials say it will be available nationally in mass merchandise, hardware and home center retailers this fall. The suggested retail price is \$29.99. For a free educational brochure on the new SA302 smoke alarm, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Fire Safety Facts, 541 North Fairbanks, Suite 2040, Chicago, IL 60611. Or for more information log on to www.firstalert.com.