

Coffee Time: A Safety Conversation



Topic: Smoke Alarm Basics —Rental Housings

Audience: Adult renters and landlords in a casual setting such as a coffee shop, library, fire station, town hall, and so forth.

Lesson Objective: By the end of the conversation, participants will be able to:

- Explain at least 3 actions residents can take to ensure smoke alarms in the home are working properly.
- Identify potential solutions for renters who do not have working smoke alarms in the home.

Prior to the Coffee Time:

The presenter must review local ordinances to determine who is responsible for installing and maintaining smoke alarms in rental housing. Also, the presenter will need to develop a list of local resources for residents who need assistance with smoke alarm installation and maintenance.

Step 1: Introduction (5–8 Minutes)

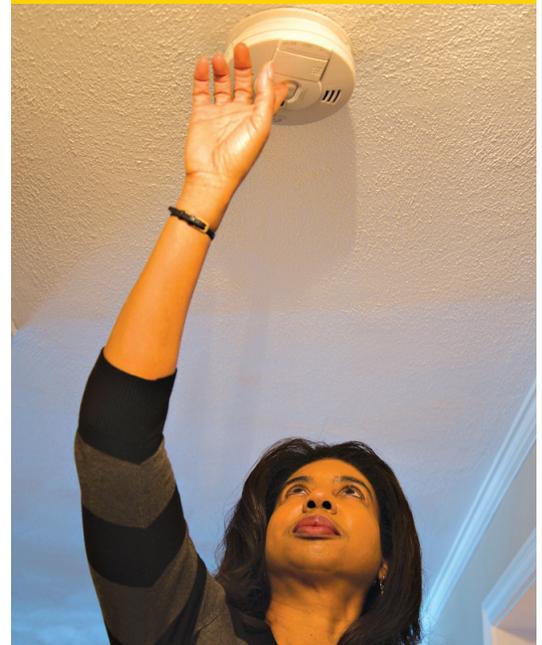
- Provide comfortable seating for conversation. To help connect with attendees, use name tags. Provide coffee or another beverage for attendees.
- Greet attendees and thank them for their time. Share your connection to the community. Let them know you are happy to help them learn more about the importance of working smoke alarms in the home. Tell them this is an informal conversation and they should feel free to ask questions at any time.
- HOOK: Ask attendees to write the name of one person who lives in their home on a piece of paper. They can select themselves or anyone else who lives in the same home. Once the name is written, ask them to take a moment to quietly think about this person. Ask attendees to draw a quick sketch of the person and write three words that describe the qualities that make this person special.
- Once each attendee is done, tape up the papers for viewing. Ask for volunteers to speak about the people they described. Let the volunteers know you appreciate hearing more about the people they care about. Tell them that it is clear these are all wonderful people who are loved.
- Now ask attendees to list ways they keep these people safe. Encourage responses such as seat belts, locks on doors, holding hands near traffic, keeping walking paths clear, and so on. If it isn't brought up, ask attendees if they have working smoke alarms in their homes to keep everyone safe. Commend everyone for taking actions to keep loved ones safe.

Educational Messages to Review:

- 1.2.1** Install smoke alarms in every sleeping room, outside each separate sleeping area, and on every level of the home, including the basement. Larger homes may require additional smoke alarms to provide a minimum level of protection.
- 1.3.1** Test smoke alarms at least once a month using the test button.
- 1.6.1** Replace all smoke alarms when they are 10 years old.

Information for Rental Properties

- 1.7.2** Be sure smoke alarms are installed in all rental housing. Contact your landlord, property manager, or fire department for help.
- 1.7.4** Maintenance of the smoke alarms may be the responsibility of the landlord or the renter, depending on the rental agreement.



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Step 2: Body (17–23 minutes)

- Inform attendees that working smoke alarms are important to a home safety plan and they play an important role in keeping people safe.

Review smoke alarm basics:

- Working smoke alarms save lives and give people time to escape if there is a fire. They should be installed on every level of the home, inside each bedroom, and outside each sleeping area. Everyone in the home should know the sound of the smoke alarm. If they hear the “Beep, Beep, Beep” sound of the alarm, they should get outside to the family meeting place. Press the test button on the smoke alarm so everyone can hear the sound it makes.
- After smoke alarms are installed, they must be maintained so they work properly. A good rule to live by is: Once a month, Once a year, Once a decade.

Ask: In reference to smoke alarms, what does “**Once a month**” refer to? Push the test button on the smoke alarms once a month to make sure it is working. Ask volunteers to find the test button on the sample alarms.

Ask: How about “**Once a year?**” What must we do once a year with our smoke alarms? Change the battery if the smoke alarm uses standard batteries. If the alarm has long-life, sealed batteries, you can skip this step.

Ask: What must happen “**Once a decade,**” every 10 years, to ensure smoke alarms are working?

Replace the smoke alarm. Like milk, credit cards, and coupons, smoke alarms have an expiration date. They are effective for up to 10 years. Replace all types of smoke alarms when they are 10 years old. When you install a new smoke alarm, circle the date on the back of it to remind you when you will need a new one.

- Hand out a few sample smoke alarms and ask volunteers to find the dates on the back of the smoke alarm. Share the 2016 Fire Prevention theme with attendees: *Don't Wait — Check the Date! Replace Smoke Alarms Every 10 Years.*
- Discuss special challenges to renters.

Ask: If you rent your home, who is responsible for these actions:

- Installing smoke alarms?
- Making sure smoke alarms stay mounted?
- Testing smoke alarms?
- Keeping fresh batteries in the smoke alarms?
- Installing new smoke alarms when they reach the 10-year mark?

- Share information about local ordinances with the attendees. Let them know that there are rules about smoke alarms. Outline tenant and landlord responsibilities. Let the attendees know that if they have a lease, they may have agreed to different responsibilities.

- Let the attendees know that the ordinances and rental agreements outline what should happen. Unfortunately, sometimes the plan is not followed. People do not always take care of their responsibilities. Tell attendees that safety must be the priority. If a landlord or tenant is not doing their job to maintain smoke alarms, someone else may need to step up to make sure the job gets done. While this can be frustrating, protecting ourselves and our loved ones is the goal. Refer back to the opening activity and the loved ones who were highlighted. Help attendees make the connection between their families and the significance of working smoke alarms.

Know Your Audience!
Gauge your attendees' familiarity with smoke alarms. If they are recent immigrants, this technology may be completely new to them. If you find this to be true, start the lesson with the NFPA easy-to-read smoke alarm tip sheet.



Don't Wait — Check the date! Replace smoke alarms every 10 years.



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- Discuss community resources for smoke alarm help.

Ask: If you need help with smoke alarm maintenance, who can you turn to? Share information about local resources available to renters to assist with smoke alarm installation and maintenance. Some examples include:

- Fire department
 - Red Cross Home Fire Preparedness Campaign
 - Neighbors and relatives
 - High school students earning community service hours
 - Clubs such as the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and Fire Explorers
 - Civic groups such as the Elks, Lions, Rotary, Kiwanis, and Shriners
 - Faith-based groups
- Encourage attendees who need assistance to reach out with a phone call to one of these resources so they can talk about their unique situation. Let them know it is good to ask for help so they can protect themselves and keep their loved ones safe.

Step 3: Conclusion (3–5 minutes)

- Wrap up the lesson with a review of the main points. We have covered a lot of information today. Let's review the important points of our conversation:
 - Every home must have working smoke alarms and everyone in the home should know the sound of the smoke alarm.
 - Install smoke alarms on every level, including the basement and outside each sleeping area. You also need to hear the beep where you sleep — install a smoke alarm wherever people sleep.
 - Test all your smoke alarms once a month by pushing the test button. Ask for help if you are not able to test your alarms.
 - Make sure your smoke alarms are less than 10 years old. Look on the back of the alarm for the date of manufacture. Replace smoke alarms every 10 years.
 - If you need help installing or maintaining your smoke alarms, speak to your landlord or one of the other local resources.
- Thank everyone for giving you their time to learn about smoke alarms.
- Distribute smoke alarm tip sheets (available at www.nfpa.org/safetytips)
- Share your contact information so attendees can get in touch with you if they have questions.

