

# Mastering the 10-Minute Mini-Lesson

SAMPLE  
LESSON  
PLAN

**Topic:** Working Smoke Alarms Save Lives

**Audience:** Adult Attendees of a Rotary Club Meeting

**Lesson Objective:** By the end of the mini-lesson, attendees will be able to explain 3 behaviors necessary to ensure smoke alarms can serve as life-saving devices.

## Step 1: Introduction (2–3 Minutes)

- *Before you start:* Place a chirping smoke alarm with a low battery near the podium. Do not tell your audience it has a low battery.
- Greet the participants and thank them for allowing you to speak for 10 minutes. Let them know you are happy to be there.
- Introduce yourself and share your connection to the community.
- **HOOK:** Share a brief news article about a fire in which non-working smoke alarms were in place.

Ex.) From Firewatch in the NFPA Journal, March/April 2014

PENNSYLVANIA — Smoke from a small fire killed a 93-year-old woman and an 84-year-old man, who had a mobility disability, in a bedroom in their single-family. The fire began when a worn electrical cord arced and overheated, igniting health care supplies underneath the victim's hospital bed.

The fire occurred in a single-story, wood-frame house with an asphalt shingled roof that covered an area of approximately 930 square feet (86 square meters). A single smoke alarm had been installed in the kitchen pantry, but its battery was dead. There were no sprinklers.

One of the occupants noticed the fire and called 911 at 1:18 a.m. Arriving firefighters found that the fire had burned itself out, but not before the man and woman were both exposed to high levels of carbon monoxide.

- Ask audience members how they feel about the story. Folks will likely say things like sad, frustrated, could've been prevented, etc...
- Explain the purpose of your visit: "Each year, too many people die in home fires that could have been detected by working smoke alarms. It isn't enough to install the alarms. They must also be maintained. Let's spend a few minutes today talking about how to make sure your smoke alarms can keep you safe."

## Step 2: Body of the Presentation (5–6 minutes)

- Share the following concept with the audience: (Use props and/or visuals to increase engagement)  
"A Rule to Live By: Once a month, Once a year, Once a decade"
- Inform the audience that the Once a month, Once a year, Once a decade rule will help them to keep their smoke alarms in working order.

**ASK:** In reference to smoke alarms, what does "Once a month" refer to?

- Everyone should test home smoke alarms at least once a month using the test button.

## Educational Messages to Review:

### 1 Smoke Alarms

**1.3.1** Test smoke alarms at least once a month using the test button.

**1.5.1** Smoke alarms with non-replaceable (long-life batteries) are designed to remain effective for up to 10 years. If the alarm chirps, warning that the battery is low, replace the entire smoke alarm right away.

**1.5.2** For smoke alarms with any other type of battery, replace batteries at least once a year. If that alarm chirps, replace only the battery.

**1.6.1** Replace all smoke alarms when they are 10 years old.



Your Source for SAFETY Information

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[www.nfpa.org/education](http://www.nfpa.org/education)

## — Mastering the 10-Minute Mini-Lesson: **Smoke Alarms** —

**ASK:** What is the sound of a working smoke alarm?

*Beep, Beep, Beep, pause Beep, Beep, Beep*

Press the test button on a smoke alarm as a demonstration. Warn the crowd first.

**ASK:** What is your smoke alarm telling you if it “chirps”?

*The battery is low. If you have a smoke alarm with standard batteries, install a new battery when the alarm chirps. If your smoke alarm has long-life, non-replaceable batteries, you must replace the entire smoke alarm if it chirps.*

At this point, refer to the chirping smoke alarm you’ve placed near the podium if an audience member hasn’t pointed it out already. Let folks know that this is the sound that tells them the battery is low.

**ASK:** How about “**Once a year**”? What must you do once a year with your smoke alarms?

*Change the battery if your smoke alarm uses standard batteries.*

*If you have long-life, non-replaceable batteries in your smoke alarm, you can skip this step.*

- Here’s the big question! “**Once a decade!**” Ten Years!

**ASK:** What must happen “Once a decade,” every 10 years, in order to ensure you have working smoke alarms?

*Replace the smoke alarm. Smoke alarms have a shelf life. They are designed to be 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, write the date on the back of it to remind you when you will need a new one.*

### **Step 3: Conclusion** (1–2 minutes)

- Let’s review! Ask the audience members to respond in unison: When you say “What’s the Rule to Live By?” they respond with “**Once a month, Once a year, Once a decade!**” Do this a few times until you feel the group is responding energetically.
- Ask for volunteers to remind everyone what each time frame requires:
  - Once a month:** Test your smoke alarms using the test button
  - Once a year:** Change the battery if your smoke alarm uses standard batteries
  - Once a decade:** Replace the smoke alarm with a new one.
- Remind the audience that simple steps will help increase safety in the home.
- Share your contact information and encourage attendees to contact you if they have questions or concerns about other fire issues.
- Thank everyone for their time and for inviting you to speak.

