



CHILDREN AND SMOKE ALARMS

Research indicates that sleeping children don't always awake when a smoke alarm activates. While this research is worrisome but shouldn't be allowed to obscure the fact that smoke alarms are highly effective at reducing fire deaths and injuries.

We would like to reaffirm the value of the smoke alarms to protect people from home fire deaths and voice the concern about the gross number of U.S. households without these early warning devices. While 96% of American homes have at least one smoke alarm, no smoke alarms were present, or none operated, in two out of five, (41%) of the reported home fires between 2003-2006. Almost two-thirds (2/3) of home fire deaths resulted from fires in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms.

We want to emphasize the need to continue planning and practicing home fire escape plans to make sure everyone in a home can be awakened by the sound of the smoke alarm. The NFPA suggests practicing the escape plan while the smoke alarm is activated so all family members know its sound.

Every home fire escape plan is different and every family should know who will – and who won't – awaken at the sound of the smoke alarm. If someone doesn't wake up when the alarm sounds during a drill, the family should design an escape plan that assigns a grown-up who is easily awakened by the alarm to wake the sleepers, perhaps by yelling "FIRE," pounding on the wall, or door, or blowing a whistle.

A new study by the American Academy of Pediatrics, showed that 96 percent of children woke up to the recorded sound of their mothers voice in a median time of 20 seconds, compared to only 58 percent who woke up to conventional smoke alarm tones.

More importantly, 86 percent of the children responding to their mother's recorded voice self-escaped in less than three minutes compared to only 38 percent who self-escaped in a median time of five minutes when they were exposed to the conventional alarm tones.

There are many different brands of self recordable smoke alarms. A toned alarm-sounding smoke detector is better and safer than not using a warning device at all.