



FIRE MARSHAL – TOWN OF EAST HAMPTON
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To our fellow residents,

This letter is in response to a question of why we should replace smoke detectors every 10 years. The National Fire Protection Association cites studies that support the fact that there is an average 3% rate of failure of smoke detectors per year. They also concluded that after thirty years nearly all detectors will fail to work properly. NFPA summarizes by saying that replacement after ten years, with a roughly 30% probability of failure, is an appropriate balance between safety and cost. Also think of the advancements in technologies over a ten year period. If a new product can warn you in the event of an emergency quicker and more accurately, wouldn't you want that in your home? How many times in the last ten years have you replaced a convenience item like a TV or cell phone that still "worked fine"? We also need to take time to maintain and test smoke detectors "as per manufacturer's recommendations". Most brands user manuals suggest to only test the unit by pressing the built in switch that accurately analyses the detector's operation as required by Underwriters Laboratories (UL). They all go on to state to never use an open flame device and most do not advocate the use of smoke, real or canned. The use of real smoke could potentially saturate, contaminate or over time desensitize the detector leaving you with a false sense of security. As a Fire Marshal I have seen all too often the importance of working smoke detectors. My family home is over ninety years old but all of my smoke detectors are less than ten. I hope this information is helpful for residents to choose the best course of action for their families. Practice Fire Safety Every Day.

Wishing everyone a Fire Safe 2017,

David Browne Chief Fire Marshal

