

Residential Fire Alarms Systems **Do you know how yours works?**

As a result of changes in Building and Fire Codes, all homes that have been constructed in the last ten years have been required to have smoke alarms in all bedrooms and on each level of the home. These smoke alarms are required to be wired into the home's electrical system, have a battery backup and be connected to each other, so if one sounds they all sound.

When the alarms go off in the house, trying to locate which one is causing the alarm often times very difficult. Homeowners often call the fire department for assistance. However, there are a few simple things that you can do to try and correct the problem before calling the fire department.

Because it is a system of alarms, they are all connected to each other and always "talking" to each other. You can see them doing so if you watch for the light on the alarm to blink every few seconds. This is the alarms "talking" to each other. When there is an alarm and you are certain it is a false alarm, locating which alarm caused it is simple if you know what you are looking for. For a majority of the smoke alarms, all you have to look for is the one with the red light that is "locked" on, instead of flashing, this is the alarm causing the problem.

Once you have located the problem alarm, remove it from the mounting plate by usually turning a quarter turn counterclockwise. Then disconnect the plug from the back of the alarm. This will usually silence the system.

Prior to re-installing the alarm, vacuum it out or use canned air to blow out any dust or dirt that maybe in the unit. Also, verify that the battery has been replaced within the last year. Reconnect the plug to the back of the unit and reinstall it to the mounting plate. The system may give a short beep or chirp and then quit. The system has now been reset.

If you continue to have false alarms and it appears to be the same unit each time, you will want to replace that smoke alarm with the same type. There could be some electrical wiring involved so you should contact a licensed electrician if you are not familiar with wiring.

If you are unable to get your system to reset and need assistance, feel free to contact the fire department. In most instances, a District Fire Chief will respond and assist you. However, if at anytime you can smell smoke or are not sure if there is a fire or not, leave the house immediately and call 911 from a cell phone or at a neighbor's house.

If you have any questions regarding your smoke alarm system please feel free to contact the Spring Lake Park-Blaine-Mounds View Fire Department at 763-786-4436 or your City's Fire Marshal's Office.