

# State & Local Officials Tout 10 Year Smoke Detector Law At Belleville FD

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**BELLEVILLE** – In conjunction with Fire Prevention Month, state and local fire safety experts gathered at the Belleville Fire Department to make the public aware of Illinois' new 10-year smoke detector law.

"In 2020, there were 107 residential fire deaths in Illinois and sadly nearly 70 percent of these deaths are occurring in homes without working smoke detectors," said Illinois Fire Safety Alliance (IFSA)/IL Firefighters Association Government Affairs Director Margaret Vaughn. "We worked with the General Assembly to pass a law to address this horrific problem, by requiring Illinois residents to replace their old smoke detectors with the type that has a long-term 10-year sealed battery by the end of 2022. This would apply to residents that are still using alarms with removable batteries or alarms that are not hardwired."

"To have the technology readily available to save lives and prevent injuries and yet not use it, is something that needed to change. Residential smoke detectors are not a new requirement. Since 1988, the Illinois Smoke Detector Act has required all dwellings to have smoke detectors. Homes built starting in 1988 had to have hardwired smoke alarms and any dwelling built before then, could use alarms that were just battery operated. The new requirement simply updates that law to reflect the changes in new technology, while making it easier and more cost-effective for Illinois residents to comply. This new law would apply mostly to homes built prior to 1988," explained Rep. Jay Hoffman (D-Belleville) who helped get the legislation through.

"It's incredibly difficult to face the family of a person who perished in a fire, who would have likely survived if the residence just had working smoke detectors to warn them while there was still time to escape. We have seen a decrease in the number of fires, but those that occur are significantly faster and more dangerous, due to hotter burning temperatures of synthetic materials and the toxic gases they give off during a fire. Where in the past, families used to have almost 30 minutes to escape, today we really only have about 3 minutes to get to safety," explained Belleville Fire Chief JP Penet.

"Working smoke detectors are too easily taken for granted. However, the majority of residential fire deaths are from smoke inhalation and not burns, which makes escape time so critical and the need for working smoke detectors paramount. During Fire Prevention Month, we want to make sure that people are aware of this new law and the difference 10-Year smoke detectors can make in saving lives, added Sen. Christopher Belt (D-East St. Louis)

"With a long-term 10-year battery smoke alarm, there is no need for battery replacement; saving the average homeowner between \$40-\$60 in battery costs over the life of each alarm. At the end of the 10-year life cycle, the smoke alarm will automatically alert the homeowner to replace the alarm," said Illinois Fire Safety Alliance Executive Director Philip Zaleski. He explained further, "while many people deactivate their older model smoke alarms or remove the batteries while cooking, the 10-year model is not a cooking nuisance and has a 15-minute silencer button. They are also very affordable with the current retail price being about \$15 and as low as \$10 if you

buy them in bulk. To avoid ‘false alarms’, smoke detectors should not be placed within 15 feet of a stove or within 3 feet of bathrooms because of the humidity.”

“Fire does not discriminate and can happen at anytime, anywhere, and to anyone. The Office of the State Fire Marshal is proud to support the *Be Alarmed!* Program, which continues to provide lifesaving education and smoke detectors to residence in Illinois. With each smoke detector installed, this reduces the risk for tragedy in our communities. We encourage everyone to check your smoke detectors in your homes and make sure they are working monthly. Replace expired or broken detectors with the new 10-year sealed battery ones,” said Illinois State Fire Marshal Matt Perez.

Illinois-based First Alert is donating 10-year battery smoke alarms and the tools and equipment to install the alarms to the Belleville Fire Department to help reduce the number of fire-related injuries to those in the community.

To learn more about protecting your family from smoke, fire, and carbon monoxide, visit the IFSA website at [www.IFSA.org](http://www.IFSA.org) or the First Alert website at [www.firstalert.com](http://www.firstalert.com).

***ABOUT THE ILLINOIS FIRE SAFETY ALLIANCE:*** *Since 1982, the Illinois Fire Safety Alliance (IFSA), a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, has been bringing together persons and groups with common interest in fire safety, burn prevention, and public education, and to promote programs and disseminate information related to fire safety and burn prevention. The IFSA also hosts burn survivor support programs including the Young Adult Summit and Camp “I Am Me,” a unique week-long camp for children who have experienced severe burn injuries. Additional information on the Illinois Fire Safety Alliance can be found at [www.IFSA.org](http://www.IFSA.org).*