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Subject: Beeping smoke detectors

Posted by [Wayne Parham](#) on Fri, 07 Jul 2023 19:39:32 GMT

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Public service announcement:

Most every website that talks about smoke detectors says that periodic chirps from a smoke detector is often an indication of a weak battery, and it recommends the solution to change the battery. I suppose you can always replace the battery and see if that works.

I've also seen television commercials that recommend replacing the battery every year. Again, I don't suppose that's a bad idea; You can always replace the battery if it makes you feel better. Might check it first, but no harm in just changing it.

But my experience has been that the most common cause of a chirp every few minutes is a weak sensor. Essentially the detector element has become old. They use a radioactive sensor element that becomes weaker as it ages. This may not be true for every brand, but it has always been the case for me.

So if you have a smoke detector that chirps every few minutes, check its age. There's a date code on it. If it's older than five to seven years or so, buy a new one to replace it. They can last as long as ten years, but why wait, why live with the possibility of an occasional chirp? Just replace it.

And of course, another complication of this aging situation is that you don't want to buy a bunch of 'em as spares sitting on the shelf. They'll age on the shelf, and by the time you need a replacement, they may be already half gone. So buy them as you need them.

When one starts chirping, buy the replacement then. If you have several throughout the house, you can always take down the bad one and throw it away while you wait for the replacement to arrive. The others will have to do the "smoke sniffing" 'til the new one comes.