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.

Subject: Re: Beeping smoke detectors
Posted by Rusty on Sat, 08 Jul 2023 15:36:58 GMT
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Thankyou Wayne. That is a really good public service announcement. I'd never considered the real reason behind that chirping and always just put batteries in. Looking up smoke detectors says the two main radioactive elements are americium and neptunium. Gee, I don't know my periodic table very well. One thing I remember from my radiography days is that bananas are radioactive. Due to potassium. You get more radiation every day though in the natural environment.
Time to go to the hardware store.

Subject: Re: Beeping smoke detectors
Posted by gofar99 on Sun, 09 Jul 2023 01:20:48 GMT
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Another reason some will chirp from time to time is high levels of humidity.

Subject: Re: Beeping smoke detectors
Posted by OutOfSpace on Mon, 31 Jul 2023 14:37:32 GMT
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A few stories... weak batteries always seem to trigger the beeping late at night when it's cold. Dealt with that many times. I really like the actual alarms in the middle of the night for no good reason. Dealt with that a number of times as well.
Another thing was dust or bugs in the sensor. Had that recently, it was a recently replaced detector with a fresh battery. A bit of compressed air resolved that.
The most funny is also "humidity" related. Several years ago I'd bought a house in a small town that was close to a senior apartment complex that received funds from Obama's stimulus plan. The units were getting much needed renovations, including replacing the smoke alarms. This involved a large dumpster up against the fence between us. Then we got some rain one evening, and some large number of smoke detectors start alarming right outside our bedroom. After a few minutes, I throw on my robe and slippers, grabbed a heavy garden rake and went mid-evil in this dumpster beating the detectors into silence. I'm sure I looked like a mad man (angry, yes; crazy? depends on who you ask :^).
Chris