



Top Reasons Your Smoke Alarm May Randomly Sound Off



Smoke alarms are extremely important in keeping you and your family safe in case of a household fire. But they don't only sound when an actual fire threatens your home. Though false alarms can occur often, that doesn't mean you should ignore the sound if you don't see or smell smoke. Smoke detectors can sense hidden fires, such as electrical ones, before you can. If an alarm sounds, assume there is a fire and follow proper safety precautions. To help you better understand how smoke alarms work, here are the top causes of smoke detector false alarms.

Burnt Food

Sometimes your cooking may produce smoke, which activates the smoke alarm. In some cases, smoke isn't even necessary — a hint of burnt food can be enough to set off the detector. Leaving bread in the toaster or popcorn in the microwave for a little too long can send heavy particles into the air, which your smoke alarm picks up. To avoid this kind of nuisance alarms, make sure your smoke alarm is optimally placed, such as in the hallway leading to the kitchen, not in the kitchen itself.

Fireplaces

Fireplaces can also cause smoke detector false alarms. Your fireplace can sometimes send smoke into your house, which sets off the alarm. This isn't the alarm's fault, though. Your chimney may not be clean, and the dampers may not be properly set. Hire a chimney sweep if your fireplace sends smoke into your home.

High Humidity and Steam

Smoke alarms don't always distinguish between smoke particles and moisture content. Thus, the density of the moisture particles can trigger your alarm, even if they're water particles. If you have high humidity in your home, use fans or windows to dissipate the humidity. Dense water vapor is like humidity when it comes to triggering false alarms. When you take a shower or boil water on the stove, smoke detectors can sense the steam and sound the alarm. Make sure you ventilate your bathroom and kitchen properly to prevent this.

Insects

Small bugs love dark crevices in your home, so they may crawl into your smoke detectors, triggering a false alarm. If you don't know what caused an alarm, open the device and check for small insects. If pests are present, clean the detector with a vacuum attachment or electronic aerosol cleaner.

Dust, Dirt and Environmental Smoke

Dust and dirt that comes from activities like remodeling may set off your smoke alarms. During wildfire season, heavy smoke and particulates in the air may also cause false alarms. To clean your smoke alarm, open it up carefully, and look inside for dust or dirt. Use a vacuum attachment or electronic aerosol cleaner to remove dust particles.

Low Batteries or Time to Replace

When smoke alarm batteries are running low or aren't properly connected, they typically make small chirping noises. While that's not the sound of smoke detection, it's a warning sign that you should check on your device. Replace batteries when this chirping occurs. Smoke alarms generally have a lifespan of about 10 years. When they reach the end of their lifespan, smoke alarms may give off false alarms. If your detector is older than 10 years, replace it with a new one right away.



For more smoke alarm information, visit www.bifd.org/smoke-alarms