

NEW HOME FALSE ALARMS

By
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Congratulations, you are a happy new home owner and have achieved the “American Dream.” You own a brand new home or a remodeled home that has a hard wired smoke detector with battery back-up in each room and you feel confident that you are safe. You were informed that if one smoke detector goes off, they all will.

There you sit in front of the fan or air conditioner trying to stay cool during this current heat wave, when suddenly all of the smoke detectors in your new home sound an ear-piercing alarm! At first you panic and search the entire home for any sign of smoke or fire. Then after finding nothing wrong, but still in a dither, you wonder what to do. “Should I call the fire department or not?” The fire department would prefer that you call if there is an emergency, but is there really a need to dial 911? Perhaps the problem is not an emergency after all. (If in doubt, do call the fire department as there could be a hidden electrical fire.)

Hopefully your practiced emergency escape plan is in effect and the entire family is gathered by the old oak tree in the front yard and you have an “ABC rated” fire extinguisher readily accessible in the home.

Perhaps it is time for another search and some deductive reasoning. You search the home again checking each smoke detector but find nothing wrong. Out of frustration, you may have switched off all of the circuit breakers but still the alarms are sounding. What to do? What to do?

Most new homes are wired with two kinds of detectors, smoke detectors and heat detectors. Smoke detectors are installed in the basement, near staircases, in hallways, bedrooms, etc.; while heat detectors are installed in garages, laundry rooms and attics. Regardless of the type, all of the detectors in the home will sound an alarm at the same time if hard wired, and will continue to sound an alarm until the problem is eliminated as each detector is wired together. Shutting off the power will not stop the alarms as the batteries will still provide power (providing the batteries are good).

The problem remains, either there is a fire or there is an excessive amount of heat in some part of the home. In that no fire or smoke can be found, the problem may lie with one of the smoke or heat detectors. Each heat detector needs to be examined. You may be wise to call an electrician for a detector may be defective.

If your area is in the middle of a heat wave, the culprit and source of your disturbance may be the heat detector in the attic. The sun blaring down upon the roof can cause the temperature in an attic to soar, causing heat detectors to respond as

designed, and triggering all detectors in the home to sound an alarm. Excessive heat can cause spontaneous combustion, so heat detectors are installed to alert the occupants that a problem exists.

Since the alarms are still screaming away, something must be done. Go up into the attic and twist the heat detector to remove it from the mounting ring and then pull the wire plug out of the rear of the detector and remove the battery. Hopefully disconnecting the attic heat detector will stop all of the alarms, but if not, then you should repeat the process with the heat detectors in the garage, laundry room or boiler room. If you are unsuccessful, **CALL THE FIRE DEPARTMENT!**

Assuming that the smoke detectors have stopped and your blood pressure is returning to normal, you are left with the quandary of what to do next? Have you ever gone camping?