

Building a Better Smoke Alarm

New fire alarm technology more effective at waking people than standard smoke alarm

(NAPS) – Smoke alarms save lives, but only if they work to alert the people at risk. Consider that an estimated 70 million Americans have high-frequency hearing loss. In fact, 44 percent of people with hearing loss [do not wake](#) to the sound of standard smoke alarms due to their high pitch. With roughly [half of all home fire deaths](#) resulting from incidents reported between 11:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m., this is a significant safety issue.

“About 94 percent of households have working smoke detectors, so it’s time to embark on the next endeavor,” said Kim Bacon, community liaison officer for the West County EMS and Fire Protection District near St. Louis. “We need to identify those who may not be able to wake from a standard smoke alarm and help them find an alarm that is right for their needs.”

According to [fire safety studies](#) commissioned by the Fire Protection Research Foundation and the U.S. Fire Administration, many people – including people with impaired hearing, seniors, children, and heavy sleepers – are more at risk because they don’t wake up readily from standard smoke alarms due to their high pitch.

“For the millions of Americans who experience hearing loss at any level, fire safety is often an overlooked problem,” said Brenda Battat, executive director of the [Hearing Loss Association of America](#). “Even though some people might hear their smoke alarm during the day, it may not wake them from sleeping.”

Most people with hearing loss have more trouble hearing high frequencies than low ones. However, the typical smoke alarm uses a high 3100 Hz pure tone signal – resulting in a less than effective means of awakening those who are vulnerable. Recent [scientific research on hearing loss and fire alarms](#) has demonstrated that a 520 Hz square-wave signal is at least four to 12 times more effective at waking people at risk than the current high-pitched signal.

While new standards are being reviewed for fire alarms, a low-frequency option is now available to homeowners. The [Lifetone HL™ Bedside Fire Alarm and Clock](#) is the only UL-Listed fire alarm available that uses a 520 Hz square-wave technology and a bed shaker. The Lifetone HL listens for the sound that is broadcast by standard smoke alarms, then emits its own loud, low frequency sound right at the bedside. The Lifetone HL works with current smoke alarms, so homeowners do not need to replace their existing systems.

“There is sometimes a social stigma that goes along with hearing loss that prevents people from seeking the products they need to protect themselves,” said Dr. Sergei Kochkin, executive director of the non-profit [Better Hearing Institute](#). “It’s critical that people evaluate their needs for both daytime and nighttime to ensure a safe environment for themselves and their families.”

For more information on fire safety for people with hearing loss, older adults, and children visit www.lifetonesafety.com. For more information about hearing loss, visit www.hearingloss.org or www.betterhearing.org.

###