

## Fire officer sounds alarm on safety

If you've pushed the test button on your home smoke alarm and heard the reassuring wail, it doesn't mean you're protected, fire safety experts warn.

Because of legislative gaps, an absence of education programs and public ignorance, there may be tens of thousands of homes across Ontario with malfunctioning smoke alarms.

Those alarms may not provide any warning, or enough time, for occupants to get out alive.

"All smoke alarms have a 10-year life expectancy," said Derrick Ethridge, a fire prevention officer with the Loyalist Township fire department. "We don't know what's going to happen after 10 years."

Ethridge has begun a campaign to warn about outdated smoke alarms.

He notes that in 1997, rules governing construction standards in the province were toughened, requiring the installation of interconnected, permanently wired smoke alarms on every storey of newly built houses.

Manufacturers of the alarms caution that the devices should be replaced after 10 years.

"There is no legislation requiring the replacement after 10 years," said Chris Slosser, of the Ontario Fire Marshal's Office.

After 10 years, internal components in a detector can stop functioning properly.

"There is the possibility that it won't work," Slosser said.

Ethridge believes that many homes have outdated detectors because owners don't know the life-saving devices need to be replaced.

*The Institution of Fire Engineers – International Fire News Update*