

*A resolution encouraging federal authorities to review and modify, as needed, federal policy requirements to permit adoption of new smoke alarm technologies*

Offered by:  
Underwriters Laboratories  
International Code Council  
National Fire Protection Association

Whereas there are more than 300,000 residential fires in the United States every year;

Whereas nearly 3,000 civilians die annually in home fires;

Whereas homes today are, on average, 56 percent larger than homes built in 1970, with synthetic materials making up much of today's furnishings;

Whereas synthetic furnishings burn faster and hotter than natural materials such as cotton, wool or linen, while the modern home's open floor plans can contribute to significantly reduced evacuation times;

Whereas smoke alarms in some instances can be activated mistakenly during ordinary events, such as cooking, with these nuisance alarms often resulting in home occupants disabling their smoke alarms, putting themselves at higher risk for injury or death during a home fire;

Whereas listed smoke alarms, properly installed in accordance with applicable codes and standards, tested and maintained according to manufacturer's recommendations are a critical component of fire safety and complement other recommended practices such as having and practicing home escape plans, testing smoke alarms and closing bedroom doors at night;

Whereas smoke alarm technology is evolving rapidly to account for the changing fire dynamics created by the prevalence of synthetic furnishings and to address the hazards of both smoldering and flaming fires, while reducing nuisance alarms from cooking;

Whereas there are new industry product safety standards that require significant new sensor technology in all new smoke alarms;

Whereas these new safety and performance standards are driving innovative technologies in smoke alarms that recognize multi-sensing criteria using a mathematical algorithm to determine when an alarm signal is warranted potentially rendering traditional alarms with single sensing technologies such as ionization and photoelectric no longer available in the consumer market place;

Whereas working smoke alarms that are within 10 years of their manufacture date continue to provide protection in the case of fire and, upon replacement, should be replaced with listed and labeled smoke alarms that are certified as meeting the latest safety standards;

Whereas these new technologies may not incorporate long-life/non-rechargeable battery technology currently required by many existing policies;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Congressional Fire Services Institute encourages federal authorities to:

1. Review existing federal policy (i.e., statutory, regulatory, procurement) requirements, and as appropriate,
2. Modify such requirements to embrace smoke alarms conforming to the latest industry standards in a performance-based, technology-neutral manner; and further,
3. Continue to collaborate with industry partners to educate citizens on the need for properly installed, listed smoke alarms as a key component of residential fire safety.