



ARE YOU READY?

Be prepared with CEPIN!

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Technology

Which smoke alarm is best for you?

By Stephanie Clark

Fatal fires often occur when people are sleeping, because smoke will put a person into deeper sleep if she or he does not wake up in time. Smoke alarms are life-saving devices, but which one best fits your needs? Be prepared and learn the differences.

POWER OUTAGES

Most smoke alarms are plugged into an electrical system and will not operate during power outages. It's always wise to have a back-up plan. A life-saving step may be to get an Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS), a battery that sits between an electronic device (smoke alarm, computers, or TTY) and a power source such as a wall plug. When the power goes out, the UPS will supply power to your auditory/visual/vibratory smoke alarms. When considering a smoke alarm device, check to see if it's UPS-compatible.

STROBE LIGHTS

Did you know that smoke alarms with strobe lights work while in the AC power mode, but will not work in the backup battery mode? This means the alarm will beep, but its light won't flash. If you receive a free strobe light from your local fire department or elsewhere, ask if the backup battery mode will allow the strobe lights to flash.

SEPARATE SMOKE ALARMS VS. RECEIVERS

Most independent smoke alarms are not wired in a way that allows receivers to receive transmissions. For example, if a separate visual/auditory smoke alarm is placed somewhere in your home and you walk into another room, you won't see the flashing lights. For a hard of hearing person, the sound may be too high or too low. It is recommended that you have a multi-alert system that allows you to place several smoke alarm transmitters in different places at your home. This way, if one device goes off, all other transmitters will go off.



VIBRATING SMOKE ALARMS

Are you a heavy sleeper? For heavy sleepers and/or DeafBlind individuals, a smoke alarm that vibrates your bed may be best. If you do not have auditory or visual smoke alarms in a certain part of your house – for instance, maybe you're cleaning the attic while your fire alarm goes off in the kitchen – there's a solution. You can have a wireless receiver attached to your belt or pocket that receives signals from the smoke alarm. Wireless receivers often have a 100-foot range, allowing you to walk around your home without worrying about not seeing or hearing the smoke alarm.

AUDITORY SMOKE ALARMS

If you have a hearing loss, make sure your smoke alarm gives out sound that ranges from a minimum of 85 dB and a maximum of 120 dB. Check your local SHHH organization for recommendations on what smoke alarms are most ideal for hard of hearing people.

UNIVERSAL APPROACH

You may install a visual smoke alarm with flashing transmitters in your house that does not have sound. But what happens if friends and/or colleagues who are hard of hearing, late-deafened, deafblind or hearing and the alarm goes off? It's a good idea to have a visual, vibrating, and auditory multi-alert system in place so everyone is safe in your home, regardless of their hearing statuses.

Be sure to check your alarms regularly to make sure they are in full operating mode!



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This month: FIRE SAFETY

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Prepared for the unexpected

By Jim House

This past September was extraordinary. The Gulf Coast was battered with two major hurricanes. New Orleans was spared a direct hit from Katrina, but the levees could not handle the tremendous amount of water. The storm surge caused several breaches that flooded 80% of the city. Smaller towns west of New Orleans that survived the first hurricane were obliterated by Rita three weeks later. Many people lost their homes and are now beginning their lives anew in other states.

The Community Emergency Preparedness Information Network (CEPIN) team immediately went to the aid of hurricane survivors who were deaf and hard of hearing. Our Midwest regional center, CSD of Oklahoma in Tulsa, was the closest center and automatically the point of contact.

CEPIN Regional Specialist Kristina Hakey, recently became certified to work in rescue with her local Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). She immediately started looking for deaf and hard of hearing survivors. Kristina's manager, Glenna Cooper, called upon a network of professionals she had collaborated with in the past to ensure that every deaf and hard of hearing survivor had access to information. CSD donated additional manpower and videophones for installation in the Houston Astrodome and other shelters in Austin, Dallas and San Antonio.

Lise Hamlin from Northern Virginia Resource Center, another CEPIN regional center, covered Alabama, Florida and Mississippi. While the media was focused on the plight of New Orleans, states east of Louisiana sustained more

damage from Katrina. Lise received a call from a woman whose niece was listed as "dead" in the now-infamous e-mail listing the "deaths" of 17 deaf people. To make a long story short, Lise was able to reunite that woman with her niece, who was very much alive. Four others on that list were also confirmed to be alive.

As the tragedy spread nationwide with the largest displacement of families since the Civil War, our other regional specialists worked closely with officials waiting to receive displaced survivors. Several deaf and hard of hearing survivors went to other states and received support from local services at their destinations. All of us kept local and federal officials informed of things that were not happening, such as accessible television news bulletins and interpreter access into shelters.

September was the second annual National Preparedness Month. CEPIN was involved with 20 workshops and other disaster preparedness events in seven states. The hurricanes have sparked a renewed interest in being prepared, an interest unseen since 9/11. We are continuing to learn new lessons from Katrina and Rita, and will be more prepared than ever for any upcoming disasters.

This month is Fire Safety Month, and we hope you find the articles in this issue to be useful. As always, be prepared!



House is the national coordinator for the CEPIN Project at TDI. He may be reached at jimhouse@tdi-online.org.

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Sign up for the newsletter and other
CEPIN Project news bulletins by going to
www.cepintdi.org!**

Be prepared for a fire anywhere, anytime

By Kristina Hakey

Each year, more than 4,000 Americans die and 25,000 are hurt from fire. When a fire starts, it will spread quickly – so quickly that there is no time to get your personal things or make a phone call. We need to learn how to prevent this from happening - by being prepared.

SMOKE ALARMS

A visible working smoke alarm can double your chances of survival. Test it monthly, keep it free of dust and replace the battery at least once every year. Smoke alarms themselves should be replaced after ten years of service, or as recommended by the manufacturer. (See article on front page to learn which type of alarm best fits your needs.)

ESCAPE PLANS

You and your family should practice an escape plan from every room in your home. Warn everyone to stay low to the floor when escaping from the fire, and never open doors that feel hot. Select a meeting place where everyone can meet after escaping from the house. Get out first, then call for help. Contact your local fire department if you would like further help with your escape plan.

CHILDREN

Children under five are naturally curious about fire, and may play with matches and lighters. Tragically, children set over 20,000 house fires every year. Teach your children that fire is a tool, not a toy. Also teach them not to hide in the closet or under the bed. The best place to wait is either at the window or by the door.

IF YOU ARE ON FIRE

If there is a fire on your clothing, STOP, DROP and ROLL until the fire is gone.



IF YOUR HOME IS ON FIRE

If there is a fire in your home, escape immediately. If you are in a room with a closed door, *before* you open the door, check the door for heat first before opening. Use the back of your hand to feel for heat on top of the door and on the door knob. If it is hot, do not open the door. Find another way to leave the room. If you are stuck in a room, throw everything you can outside the window. Seeing a pillow on the ground will tell a firefighter to look up and they'll see who needs help.

Remember to stay out once you have escaped, and contact 9-1-1 or your local emergency number to get help.

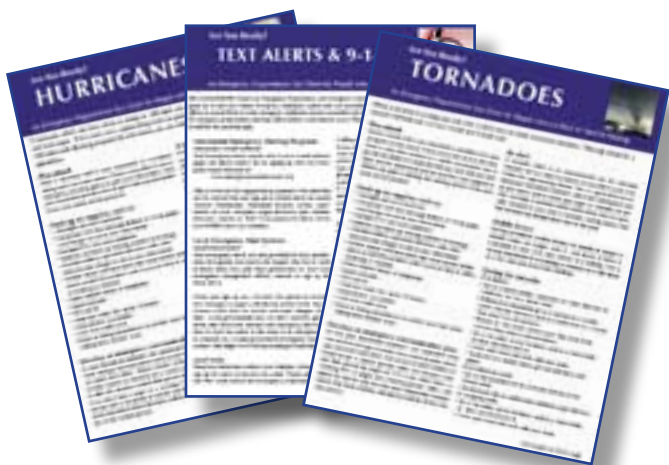


Hakey is the regional specialist for the Midwest and Southwest region. She works with CSD of Oklahoma in Tulsa, and may be reached at khakey@c-s-d.org.

Fact sheets available for you

The CEPIN Project team has developed fact sheets for you. They focus on how deaf or hard of hearing people can be prepared for a variety of emergencies or disasters, and other emergency-related resources.

To download the fact sheets, go to:
www.cepintdi.org (click on National Resources).



Making sure you're safe

Fire safety & public policy

By Lise Hamlin

Several years ago I lived in a fifth floor walk-up loft in Manhattan. My neighbors were young and friendly college guys who were sub-letting the loft below mine. One night, one of the guys fell asleep while a candle was still lit. Not a good idea. The curtains caught fire and lit up the whole place in no time.

It was 2:00 am when I woke up to a room full of smoke. I was disoriented, groggy, and to this day I don't know what woke me up, but I did know I had to get out of that apartment as quickly as possible. When I reached the loft door, there were several firefighters ready to break in with their sledgehammers. I left the apartment wearing my ratty old nightgown, no hearing aid, no glasses and no shoes. I walked five flights down to the street where I watched the firefighters throw out half of my downstairs neighbor's charred possessions out the window. I was lucky that night: not only did I get out alive, but there was very little smoke damage to my apartment, and none to my possessions.

I learned a lot from that experience. First, get a new nightgown. No, no. First, get a smoke alarm that works for me. Keep my hearing aids and glasses right by my bed. And keep a sturdy pair of shoes by the bed. It wouldn't hurt to have a set of clothes nearby too.



According to the National Fire Protection Association, during 2002, an estimated 18,000 home fires started by candles were reported to public fire departments. These fires resulted in an estimated 130 civilian deaths, 1,350 civilian injuries and an estimated direct property loss of \$333 million.

Now that I'm living in Maryland, I have found that there is no easy answer to fire safety. Not everyone wakes up to alarms. In fact, studies show that hard of hearing people do not respond to visual alarms in the same way deaf people do, that they wake up to low frequency alarms or tactile alarms far more readily than visual alarms. Some people are also promoting the installation of sprinkler systems. All these things can be expensive. What should you do to ensure your own safety?

First, understand your own needs. Do you wake up with a visual alarm or

not? Then, learn and know what your state or county offers. Some states and counties have visual smoke alarm distribution programs. If that works for you, and your state doesn't have a program like that, talk to the policy makers in public safety or in the telecommunication equipment distribution program in your state to see if that can be added.

If you find you still can't get what you need, you can always approach your state legislature. Fire safety professions in Maryland are promoting a bill that would mandate sprinklers in new construction for homes. Also in Maryland, a deaf consumer pushed the state legislature to create a task force that will investigate what kinds of alerting systems work best for people who are hard of hearing or deaf who live in apartments and condominiums. If you have concerns about your safety, you too can work with your state legislature to make a change to the law that helps ensure your safety in a fire.



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To learn more about how to use fire extinguishers,

check this website out:

www.ul.com/media/newsrel/nr091704.html

Get ready, get set, get out!

By Christine Seymour

As I write this, the news is reporting 17,000 acres have been burned along the outskirts of Los Angeles. In October 2003, southern California experienced the most devastating wildland fire in state history. At the peak of the siege, 15,631 firefighters battled a blaze that destroyed 739,597 acres and 3,731 homes, killing 24 people. People who were in the path of the fire were responsible for their own evacuations.

Following these simple steps may save your life and those of your family.

EMERGENCY ACCESS

- Make sure your street is clearly marked and posted.
- Make sure your house numbers can be seen easily from the street night or day.
- Know at least two different streets that can get you away from or around the fire.
- Make sure large emergency vehicles can get to your property quickly.

EMERGENCY WATER SUPPLY

- Locate the nearest fire hydrant.

- Form a cooperative with neighbors for emergency water storage.
- Mark water sources and keep clear so firefighters can find them.
- If you get water from a well, install an emergency pump to use when power goes out.

PLAN FOR EVACUATION

- Develop and practice a home evacuation plan with the following information:
 - ✓ A drawing with all escape routes (windows, doors, etc)
 - ✓ A list of valuable to take in an emergency
 - ✓ List of most important papers to have with you if such as insurance policies, medical records and driver's license
 - ✓ Emergency kit
 - ✓ A meeting place for family after leaving the house

WHEN WILDFIRE APPROACHES

- Watch TV, check pager alerts, have someone listen to radio for instructions.
- Evacuate as soon as you are told or when you know you are in danger.

- Park your cars facing the direction of the escape route with windows rolled up.
- Place you emergency kit and other important items in the car.
- Secure pets and livestock for evacuation.
- Leave your electricity and lights on.
- If you have time, wear long pants, long sleeved shirt, goggles, cap and bandana.
- Close doors behind you when you leave to slow down the flames, smoke and heat.
- Assist children, seniors and people who are disabled in evacuating safely.

Information in this article is adapted from the Los Angeles County ESP (Emergency Survival Program) at www.espfocus.org



Seymour is the regional specialist for the West and Hawaii region. She works with the Deafness Counseling Advocacy and Referral Agency (DCARA) in San Leandro, Calif., and may be reached at christine.seymour@dcara.org.

ATIP of the Month: Check your smoke alarms regularly!

In each issue, we will provide you a tip of the month that focuses on one of four areas: Action, Technology, Information, Policy, or ATIP.

1. Check each smoke alarm or receiver to make sure that it has the label of an independent testing laboratory. This indicates that it is in good working condition.
2. Install a smoke alarm on each level of your home, including the basement.
3. Test all smoke alarms monthly and change your battery every six months. An easy way to remember when is to check it every time you change your clocks for Daylight Savings Time, which falls on **OCTOBER 30 this year!** That's when we turn our clocks back an hour - and check our smoke alarms, too.

For more information on manufacturers of smoke alarms that meet UL standards for deaf and hard of hearing people, visit the National Fire Protection Association website at www.nfpa.org.



Photo courtesy of www.ci.seattle.wa.us/fire/pubEd/smokealarms/smokeAlarms.htm

Get involved!

There is a dirty misconception that deaf people cannot be involved in emergency services. Nothing could be further from the truth. The fact is that fire/rescue companies as well as Community Emergency Response Teams across the country are screaming for volunteers.

In fact, depending on a variety of factors, deaf people can serve as front-line firefighters (like myself), Emergency Medical Technicians, Search & Rescue specialists and other types of emergency responders. The work is challenging and sometimes dangerous, but the reward of helping others is worth it.

Personally, I love the fire service because I get to experience a variety of situations that most people, deaf or hearing, would never have. I've worked inside burning buildings, I've trained alongside some of the best firefighters, I've seen people die and I've seen people survive as well as dealt with some truly weird situations. Overall, it's al-

ways something different every day and I enjoy that.

To volunteer on the front lines is not an easy task. Most places require at least 160 hours of training for fundamentals and also continuing education so your skills are current. They also have the uncanny knack of calling you away from friends and family at awkward times.

If you're not up for going into burning buildings or treating medical emergencies, you can still help. Many of these agencies need volunteers to help keep things running smoothly behind the scenes. In my department, we rely on volunteers to help with everything from traffic control, fundraising, and making sure incident reports are entered into the computer. If you would like to help a fire or rescue department with their administrative tasks, go to www.firecorps.org to find out more.

In other areas, the Federal Government has established groups of citizen

responders called Community Emergency Response Teams who assist the fire/rescue teams with large-scale incidents. Such assistance could involve delivering water and food to first responders to helping with crowd control. For more information on CERT, visit <http://training.fema.gov/emiweb/CERT/>. Many CERT teams have been proactive in including deaf people and people with disabilities in their membership rosters.



Neil McDevitt is a volunteer Firefighter with the Fire Dept. of Montgomery Township in Pennsylvania. He is also president of The McDevitt Group,

which provides emergency preparedness consulting services for people with disabilities. Its website is at www.themcdevittgroup.com. Photo courtesy of Intelligencer.

Sparky can help teach your kids about **FIRE SAFETY!**



It's never too early to start teaching children about fire safety. The National Fire Protection Agency has a website (see below for address) dedicated to teaching children. Sparky is a fire dog who guides children through games, stories and safety tips.

Sparky says his favorite week is Fire Prevention Week, which is October 9-15. Help him celebrate by educating your children or students on preventing fires!

Sparky's website is at: www.nfpa.org/sparky