Smoke Detectors

This is a repeat article because I am still getting calls about changing them out.

Someone had called and asked me about changing out the smoke detectors in his home as he heard the lifespan for them was about 10 years. He also wanted to know if he should just buy the stand alone ones that are battery powered only. This to replace his original hard wired ones.

First, 10 years is what is touted as a smoke alarms useful life span, the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) says most smoke alarms have a life span of eight to 10 years, so the answer to that question is yes, replace them. Even if they seem to be working now, their sensitivity has degraded and they may fail in the near future. As to the type, I recommend the hard wired ones that we have now, although they could be a different brand. The difference in price is about $2.00/unit and most of us only need 4 to 6 units so the money shouldn't be an issue. The stand alone units will alarm if there is a fire/smoke near it but will not set off the other alarms in the house. So if the attic unit alarms and you are sleeping in the bedroom you may not hear it. Since we already have the wiring, why not use it. The hard wired ones do two things the stand alone ones can't. The hardwired units use your house electricity as the primary source of power and the 9 volt batteries as back-up. The hard wired ones will set off all the units in your house if any one of the units detects fire/smoke so if you are home you will definitely hear the alarm and have time to get out. Best I can tell the wiring is universal but the plug and pigtails may be different. The ones on this site - http://www.firstalertstore.com/store/products/sa9120bcn-120vac-hardwired-smoke-alarm-with-battery-backup.htm from First Alert seem to be the same and are

the ones I am going to buy. They have a real nice feature where you just open a door on the side of the unit to change the battery instead of pulling the unit down and struggling to get it back up again. If you are handy you could do it yourself or hire a handyman or electrician. Make sure you locate all the units so you know how many to buy and replace. Costco has a different brand but work just as well. The same life span is also what is recommended for your Carbon Monoxide detectors, so you may want to think about replacing them also. I also get calls that the smoke alarms are beeping but they can't find the one that is going off even though they changed all the batteries. In that case, look for your carbon monoxide detector as that is probably the culprit.

This and other articles at http://www.bellboatbob.com/fairwaysmaintenance.htm

HOW TO INSTALL THIS SMOKE ALARM

This Smoke Alarm is designed to be mounted on any standard wiring junction box to a 4-inch (10 cm) size, on either the ceiling or wall. Read "Recommended Locations For Smoke Alarms" and "Locations to Avoid For Smoke Alarms" before you begin installation.
Tools you will need: • Needle-nose pliers or utility knife • Standard Flathead screwdriver.

⚠WARNING!
Make sure the Alarm is not receiving excessively noisy power. Examples of noisy power could be major appliances on the same circuit, power from a generator or solar power, light dimmer on the same circuit or mounted near fluorescent lighting. Excessively noisy power may cause damage to your Alarm.

THE PARTS OF THIS SMOKE ALARM

The Mounting Bracket:
To remove the mounting bracket from the Smoke Alarm base, hold the Smoke Alarm base firmly and twist the mounting bracket counterclockwise.
The mounting bracket installs onto the junction box. It has a variety of screw slots to fit most boxes.

The Power Connector:
The power connector plugs into a power input block on the Smoke Alarm. It supplies the unit with AC power.

• The black wire is "hot."
• The white wire is neutral.
• The orange wire is used for interconnect.

If you need to remove the power connector, insert a flat screwdriver blade between the power connector and the security tab inside the power input block. Gently pry back the tab and pull the connector free.
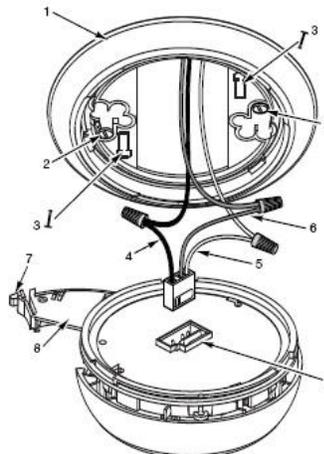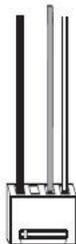
The Parts of This Unit

1	Mounting Bracket
2	Mounting Slots
3	Locking Pins (break out of bracket)
4	Hot (Black) AC Wire
5	Neutral (White) AC Wire
6	Interconnect (Orange) Wire
7	Latch to Open Battery Compartment
8	Swing-Out Battery Compartment
9	Quick-Connect Power Connector