



July 27, 2012

The Honorable Arthur Orr
Alabama Senate
Suite 737
Alabama State House
11 South Union Street
Montgomery, AL 36130-4600

Dear Senator Orr,

WHNT News 19 in Huntsville recently aired an extremely profound investigation on smoke alarms. It was an eye-opening piece we believe will save lives. A little background if you will.

Right now some significant issues are being raised about smoke detectors. Yes, there are 2 types: ionization and photoelectric.

Approximately 95% of all detectors installed in homes today are the ionization type. Unfortunately, ionization detectors are not very good at detecting the type of fires that result in the most fatalities: smoldering fires.

Most fire fatalities result not from exposure to flames but rather to smoke inhalation. In our report, WHNT News 19 conducted a simple aquarium smoke test – putting up the two types of smoke alarm against each other. The photoelectric fire alarm sounded much more quickly – nearly 20 minutes earlier. In a real situation, people would have been able to get out of their homes in time. However, most people have ionization type alarms in their homes.

Smoke detectors are listed and approved by UL (Underwriters Laboratory). But, the test protocol that UL uses in assessing smoke detectors was developed decades ago. During our investigation, UL even admitted to WHNT News 19, that they recommend both types of smoke alarms in residences.

Vermont, Iowa, Massachusetts as well as many municipalities around the country have banned ionization type detectors because of the flaws in the system. Tennessee currently has legislation that would require photoelectric alarms in all homes. We want and need to get Alabama on board. That's where you come into play! Here's some response we believe will help support action on your part.

- **Ed Paulk, Alabama State Fire Marshal:**
"Although either is currently acceptable under Alabama Code, I personally and professionally endorse a dual-type fire alarm system which combines both photoelectric and ionization sensors."
- **Harold A Schaitberger, General President of International Association of Firefighters:**
"Using better (photoelectric) smoke alarms will drastically reduce the loss of life among citizens and fire fighters."
- **Steve Butler, President of Huntsville Fire Fighters Local 1833:**
"I think the industry has lagged behind and that's why the IAFF took the bold step last fall and tried to urge all the states to try to change their standards."

- **Bill Loden, Vice President of the American Society of Home Inspectors:**

"Thousands of people have died needlessly in the last 20 to 30 years because of this and something must be done."

WHNT News 19 is taking action to protect families. We hope you will view our enclosed DVD. It's only 6 minutes long, but clearly exposes the flaw of the ionization smoke alarm. We believe lives will be saved in our great state if the photoelectric smoke alarm is state-mandated.

Sincerely,

Carrie Marchese
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