Cut your family's risk in half - buy smoke alarms today

Experts report that consumers may cut their risk of dying in a home fire in half simply by having a smoke alarm in their homes. Smoke alarms are available at nearly all hardware, department and discount stores, often for under $20.

• Look for the UL Mark

When you purchase a smoke alarm, look for the UL Mark on the product as well as on the packaging. The UL Mark tells you that a representative sample of the smoke alarm has been evaluated by Underwriters Laboratories Inc. (UL) to nationally recognized safety requirements. It also means that UL conducts follow-up evaluations to countercheck that samples of the smoke alarm continue to meet these safety requirements.

• There's safety in numbers

Install at least one smoke alarm on each floor of the house or residence and outside all sleeping areas. Some fire safety advocates recommend installing smoke alarms inside each sleeping area if sleeping with the door closed.

• Test, clean and maintain your smoke alarms

Working smoke alarms are needed in every home and residence. Test and maintain your smoke alarms at least once a month, or follow the manufacturer's instructions. Smoke alarms most often fail because of missing, dead or disconnected batteries. Replace batteries at least once a year.

Underwriters Laboratories Inc. (UL) is an independent product safety certification organization that has been testing products and writing Standards for Safety for over a century. UL evaluates more than 19,000 types of products, components, materials and systems annually with 21 billion UL Marks appearing on 72,000 manufacturers' products each year. UL's worldwide family of companies and network of service providers includes 62 laboratory, testing and certification facilities serving customers in 99 countries.