



# Sanibel Fire & Rescue District

## Fire Rescue and Fire Prevention



2351 Palm Ridge Road • Sanibel, Florida 33957  
Business (239) 472-5525 • Fax (239) 472-2422  
e.mail: sfrd@sanibelfire.com

December 27, 2008

Condo Owner  
C/O Island Management  
711 Tarpon Bay Road  
Sanibel, Florida 33957

RE: Smoke Detectors

Dear Owners and Rental Managers:

This letter is in response to the large number of inoperable and missing smoke detectors that are being discovered in condominiums; that have been remodeled in the past years.

Some condominium units in the past were built with a fire-burglar alarm system. These units are being disconnected by the owners; because of false alarms on the burglar alarm side of the system. Many of the owners did not realize; that they were also shutting down the power to their smoke detectors at the same time.

This past September of 2008, a fire occurred in an unoccupied condominium that went unnoticed because of this problem. Luckily, the fire-burglar alarm system in the unit above the unit with the fire was being monitored, when smoke entered that unit and the fire department was notified, but the damage was already done in the unit below with the fire. The flame damage was confined to a dehumidifier, but there was very heavy smoke damage through out the unit from the burning; plastic housing and wiring of the appliance. The unit with the fire had been without an operating smoke detector, for 4 to 5 years; due to the fact that the owner had actually removed the fire-burglar control panel not realizing that it also contained the controls for the smoke detector system too. If the fire unit itself had been occupied at the time of the fire, which occurred around 5:30AM, there could have been fire deaths.

I have found some condominiums that have been without operating smoke detectors; for 10 years or longer, just because no one took a few seconds to push the test button. Many older condominium units (built before 1980), may be using battery operated smoke detectors and need to have the battery replaced once a year. Too many times the batteries are being removed and are not being replaced by a renter or the owner; when the smoke detector goes into alarm or when it sends a warning of a low battery. A large number of smoke detectors are connected to 110 volt household power and I have found many of them either disconnected or just not working at all.

Smoke detectors that are battery operated or connected to household power; only have a life expectance of 5 to 10 years. If the smoke detector is not being checked on a regular schedule; the unit itself may sit there for years without any protection at all for the unit or for the occupants. This situation could lead to a loss of property or more important the loss of a life.

All condominium, apartment and rental units need to have their smoke detectors tested by their owners or the rental management companies as soon as possible and after that; on a regular bases, as recommended by the smoke detector manufacturer.

Please, do not hesitate to call me, if you have any questions or if you need assistance with the testing or the location placement of your smoke detectors.

Sincerely,

Donald W. Frye  
Assistant Chief/Fire Marshal

PS: As I am completing this letter there has been another fire, this one on December 28<sup>th</sup> of 2008. It was in a single family home located on Lindgren Boulevard, here on Sanibel. There were no smoke detectors in this home.

If you think about it - smoke detectors just might be the cheapest life and property protection you can buy - why not keep them working!