BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS · NO. 101

Smart Smoke & CO Alarms

Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms that talk to your phone, explained plainly: choosing, placing, testing and replacing them

A plain-English safety guide for every home

Take your time — you can't break it

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

For Kidde, First Alert, Google Nest Protect & Ring · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your smoke and carbon monoxide alarm manual. Read it in any order and at your own pace — there is no test, and you can't fall behind. It covers the ordinary alarms on your ceiling and the newer "smart" ones that send alerts to your phone: Kidde alarms that work with the Ring app, First Alert's SC5, Google's Nest Protect (no longer made), and add-on listeners. Safety always comes first in these pages: if an alarm is sounding right now, get everyone outside and call 911 from there. Everything else can wait.

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PART 1

Getting to Know Your Alarms

What smoke and carbon monoxide really are, what makes an alarm "smart," and an honest look at whether you need one. Start here.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. Of all the technology in your home, the little white alarms on the ceiling are the most important. They don't stream movies or show you photos of the grandkids. They do one job: they wake you up and get you out when something is wrong. This guide is about making sure they can always do that job, and about the newer "smart" alarms that can also send a warning to your phone.

I'm Bill. I've spent more than 30 years working with technology professionally, and these days I help folks here in Portage County, Ohio, feel at home with theirs. I wrote this guide the way I'd explain things sitting at your kitchen table: slowly, in plain English, with every new word explained the first time it comes up.

Two promises before we start

- **Safety comes first, always.** If an alarm is sounding right now, stop reading. Get everyone out of the house and call 911 from outside. Chapter 23 and Chapter 24 explain more, but that is the whole rule.
- **You can't break anything by learning.** Pressing the test button, opening an app and looking around, reading the label on the back of an alarm: none of it does any harm. The only real mistake is taking a battery out of an alarm and leaving it out, and I'll help you never need to.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What a smart alarm really gives you

An ordinary alarm can only warn the people who are home to hear it. A smart alarm can also tell you when you're at the store, at church, or visiting family out of state. It can tell a son or daughter when Mom's alarm is going off. And it can warn you about a low battery days before the 3 a.m. chirp. That's the quiet peace of mind this guide is about.

I'm only a phone call away

This guide will carry you a long way. But if you'd like a hand choosing alarms, putting them in the right places, or getting the phone alerts working, call me at **(330) 200-8042**. We'll work it out together, with no rushing and no judgment. Now let's start with the two dangers these alarms watch for.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

Smoke vs. Carbon Monoxide, in Plain Words

People often use "smoke detector" to mean any alarm on the ceiling. But there are two very different dangers, and they need different sensors. Knowing the difference helps you choose the right alarms and know what to do when one sounds.

Smoke: the warning that a fire has started

Smoke is what a fire gives off, often before you can see flames. A **smoke alarm** senses those tiny particles in the air and sounds a loud alarm. The U.S. Fire Administration warns that once a smoke alarm sounds, you may have less than two minutes to get everyone outside. That's why early warning matters so much, and why alarms belong near where people sleep.

Carbon monoxide: the invisible danger

Carbon monoxide, or **CO**, is a gas. It has no color, no smell and no taste, so you cannot notice it on your own. That's why safety agencies call it the "invisible killer." It comes from anything that burns fuel: a furnace, a gas water heater, a gas stove or dryer, a fireplace, a car running in an attached garage, or a portable generator. When one of these isn't working or venting properly, CO can build up inside the home.

A **CO alarm** has a different sensor that measures this gas and sounds its own alarm, usually with a different pattern of beeps or a spoken warning, so you can tell it apart from a smoke alarm.

Danger	What it is
Smoke	Particles from a fire. You may see or smell it. A smoke alarm senses it.
Carbon monoxide (CO)	An invisible, odorless gas from fuel-burning appliances. Only a CO alarm can sense it.
Combination alarm	One alarm with both sensors inside. It counts as a smoke alarm and a CO alarm in that spot.

STAY SAFE

A smoke alarm does not detect carbon monoxide

Unless the label says **Smoke & CO** or **combination**, a smoke alarm cannot sense carbon monoxide, and a CO alarm cannot sense smoke. Most homes with a furnace, gas appliances, a fireplace or an attached garage need both kinds. Check the front or back of each alarm for its type.

Why this matters in a Portage County winter

Our long heating season means furnaces run for months, windows stay shut, and snow can pile up over outdoor vents. The U.S. Fire Administration reminds homeowners to keep dryer, furnace, stove and fireplace vents clear of snow and debris. And during a power outage, a portable generator must only run outdoors: the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) says at least 20 feet from the house, with the exhaust pointing away, and never in a garage, even with the door open.

CHAPTER 3

What Makes an Alarm "Smart"

A **smart alarm** is still a real smoke or CO alarm. It sounds just as loudly on the ceiling. What makes it "smart" is that it also connects to your home Wi-Fi (your wireless internet) or to a home security system, so it can talk to an app on your phone.

The smart features, one at a time

Feature	What it does for you
Phone alerts when you're away	If the alarm sounds, your phone gets a notification wherever you are, as long as the alarm and your phone are both online.
Voice warnings	Instead of only beeping, many smart alarms speak: "Fire" or "Carbon monoxide," and some say which room.
Early low-battery alerts	Your phone warns you that batteries are getting low, so you can change them on your schedule instead of at 3 a.m.
Testing and silencing from the app	Some alarms let you run a test or hush a false alarm from your phone. For safety, this usually only works when you're standing near the alarm.
Sharing with family	You can invite a family member so their phone gets the alerts too.
Optional monitoring	For a monthly fee, a monitoring center can call you and request the fire department. See Chapter 28.

GOOD TO KNOW

"Smart" is about the phone, not the sensor

A smart alarm is not automatically better at sensing smoke than a good ordinary alarm. Both must meet the same safety standards. The smart part adds a second way to be warned. If the Wi-Fi goes down, a smart alarm still sounds on the ceiling like any other.

What a smart alarm can't do

- It can't call 911 by itself. Unless you pay for monitoring, the phone alert goes to you, and you decide what to do.
- It can't alert you if your home internet or power is out, or if your phone is off. The alarm itself still sounds.
- It doesn't replace an escape plan. The alarm buys you time; knowing your way out is what uses that time well (Chapter 25).

CHAPTER 4

Do You Need Smart Alarms? An Honest Look

Every home needs working smoke alarms, and most need CO alarms too. Whether they need to be *smart* is a different question, and the honest answer is: it depends on your life. Here's how I'd think it through.

Smart alarms are well worth it if...

- **You live alone**, or you're often home alone, and you'd like a family member to be alerted too.
- **You travel** or spend part of the winter away, and want to know if something happens while the house is empty.
- **You're looking after a parent** who lives on their own. A smart alarm in their home can alert your phone. Our *Protecting an Aging Parent* guide covers this in more depth.
- **Ladders are a problem.** Early battery warnings and app testing mean fewer trips up a step stool.
- **You already use the Ring app or Google Home**, so a matching alarm fits right in.

Ordinary alarms may be plenty if...

- Someone is almost always home, and everyone can hear the alarms.
- You don't have home Wi-Fi, or you'd rather not add another app.
- Your budget is tight. A good ordinary alarm costs far less than a smart one, and a working alarm of any kind is what saves lives.

FROM BILL

My honest advice

Never let the question of "smart or not" delay getting working alarms. If money is tight, put plain, listed alarms in every required spot first (Chapter 13 and Chapter 14). Add a smart alarm or two later, in the hallway outside the bedrooms, where it helps most. A mix of smart and ordinary alarms is perfectly fine, as long as every one of them works.

A middle path: listeners

If you like the alarms you have, a **listener** is a small add-on that sits near an existing alarm, hears it go off, and sends the alert to your phone. It's cheaper than replacing everything, though it needs a compatible system. Chapter 8 explains how they work.

PART 2

The Alarms You Can Buy Today

The main smart smoke and CO alarms as of November 2026, what happened to Google's Nest Protect, listeners and Alexa, and the plain choices about power, connection and shopping.

CHAPTER 5

Kidde Smart Alarms with Ring

Kidde is one of the best-known alarm makers in North America. In 2025, Kidde and **Ring** (the doorbell and security camera company owned by Amazon) launched a line of smart smoke alarms and combination smoke and CO alarms with Ring built in. They set up and send alerts through the free **Ring app**, and you don't need any other Ring device.

The models

Model	What it is
Smart Smoke Alarm	Smoke only. Comes in a hardwired version (wired to your home's power with 2 AA backup batteries) and an AA battery-powered version.
Smart Smoke + CO Alarm	Both sensors in one. Also hardwired with AA backup, with a battery version sold as well.

At launch Kidde listed the smoke alarm at $54.97 and the smoke and CO alarm at $74.97. In November 2026, Ring's own store listed the wired smoke and CO alarm at $74.98. Prices at stores vary, so check before you buy.

What they do

- **Real-time alerts** in the Ring app for smoke, CO (on the combination model) and low batteries.
- **Voice alerts** that say why the alarm is sounding.
- **Early battery warnings.** Kidde says the Ring app gives roughly 7 days' notice before the batteries get low enough to chirp.
- **Whole-home connection.** Adding one Kidde smart alarm can bring alerts from your other compatible hardwired Kidde alarms into the app. Kidde notes that this depends on the models, so check the user guide.
- **Sharing.** Other family members can get the alerts through the Ring app.
- **Optional monitoring** for a monthly fee, covered in Chapter 28.

What they need

- **2.4 GHz Wi-Fi.** Most home routers offer this. If your Wi-Fi has two names, pick the one without "5G" in it during setup.
- **Power for the wired models.** Kidde says the hardwired alarms need household power for full operation and Wi-Fi; their batteries are only a backup during an outage.

- **The right batteries.** Kidde names specific AA batteries for the wired models and says not to use lithium batteries in them. Always use the exact type the manual lists.
- **The Ring app** on a phone (iPhone or Android).

GOOD TO KNOW

Kidde alarms connect to Kidde alarms

Ring's product page says the wired Kidde smart alarm interconnects with up to 24 Kidde devices, and is not designed to interconnect with other brands unless the guide says so. If you already have Kidde hardwired alarms, that's good news. If you have a different brand wired together, ask before mixing.

CHAPTER 6

First Alert's SC5 and Other First Alert Smart Alarms

First Alert is the other big name in home alarms. Its current smart alarm is the **SC5 Smart Smoke & Carbon Monoxide Alarm**, which Google chose as the replacement for its Nest Protect (Chapter 7). It's a combination alarm, so one unit watches for both smoke and CO.

The two SC5 versions

Version	How it's powered
SC5 Hardwire	Wired to your home's power with battery backup. Comes with a quick-connect adapter plug for replacing many hardwired alarms.
SC5 Battery	Runs on six replaceable CR123A lithium batteries. No wiring needed.

In November 2026, First Alert's website listed both versions at $129.99, with a 10-year limited warranty.

What the SC5 does

- **Phone alerts** for smoke and CO through First Alert's app. (Google's help pages call it the First Alert app; First Alert's website now calls it the **Resideo Connect** app. Resideo is First Alert's parent company.)
- **Works with the Google Home app** after you link the two, and interconnects with existing Nest Protect alarms.
- **Voice alerts with a Heads-Up warning** that tell you the type of danger and which room it's in.
- **Low-battery and replace-me notices** in the app and from the alarm itself.
- **Testing** from the app or with the single test/silence button.

First Alert alarms that work with Ring

First Alert also sells a **Z-Wave** smart smoke and CO alarm that "works with Ring." Z-Wave is a low-power wireless language that home security systems use. This model connects to a **Ring Alarm** security system rather than straight to your Wi-Fi, so it's a good fit only if you already have Ring Alarm.

GOOD TO KNOW

Older First Alert "Onelink" alarms

You may have an older First Alert **Onelink** smart alarm. First Alert's store lists several Onelink models as discontinued. Your Onelink alarm still works as a smoke and CO alarm until its replace-by date. If you rely on its phone alerts, press the test button and make sure your phone still gets a notification. If it doesn't, the alarm is still protecting you on the ceiling, but plan your next upgrade.

CHAPTER 7

Google Nest Protect: Discontinued — What Owners Should Do

Google's **Nest Protect** was one of the first popular smart smoke and CO alarms. In March 2025, Google announced it would stop making it, and sell remaining stock while supplies lasted. Google didn't build a new one.

Instead, Google partnered with First Alert, which offers the SC5 (Chapter 6) as the compatible replacement for the 2nd-generation Nest Protect when used with the Google Home app.

If you own a Nest Protect, here's the good news

- **It keeps working.** Your Nest Protect is still a real smoke and CO alarm. It didn't stop working because Google stopped making new ones.
- **It now appears in the Google Home app**, alongside the older Nest app.
- **You don't have to replace it early.** Replace it when it reaches its expiration date, or sooner if it reports a sensor problem.

Find your Nest Protect's replace-by date

1. Open the **Google Home** app and tap your Nest Protect.
2. Tap **Settings** (the gear).
3. Tap **Device information**. Under Technical information, look for **Replace by**.
4. No app? Twist the Protect counterclockwise off its backplate (turn off the power at the breaker first if it's a wired one). The replace-by date is printed on the back.
5. Write the date on the cheat-sheet in Chapter 33.

Google says the 2nd-generation Nest Protect must be replaced 10 years after its **manufacture date**, not the day you installed it. The apps send reminders 3 months, 1 month and 7 days before, and the Protect chirps continuously once it expires. First-generation Protects are older and have a shorter life, so check the date on those right away.

Replacing a Nest Protect with the First Alert SC5

- **Same bracket.** First Alert says the SC5 fits the Nest Protect's mounting bracket, so the new alarm can twist onto the old backplate.

- **No rewiring** for most wired Protects: the hardwire SC5 includes a quick-connect adapter plug.
- **Interconnects with your remaining Protects**, so when one sounds, they all sound.
- **Set up in the First Alert app first, then link it to Google Home.** Google says you'll need your old Nest account moved to a Google Account first.

STAY SAFE

Have the new alarm ready before you take the old one down

Google advises having your new alarm ready to install right after you remove the old one, so that spot is never left unprotected. And for any wired alarm: turn off the power at the breaker box before touching the wiring. If you're not comfortable with that, an electrician or I can help.

For more about the Google Home app and other Nest devices, see our *Google Nest & Home* guide.

CHAPTER 8

Listeners: Making Your Existing Alarms Smart

A **listener** is a small, round add-on that you mount close to an alarm you already own. It doesn't sense smoke or CO itself. It simply listens for the special alarm sound that smoke and CO alarms make, and when it hears one, it tells your phone.

The Ring Alarm Smoke & CO Listener

- **Requires a Ring Alarm or Ring Alarm Pro** security system, sold separately. It talks to the Ring Alarm base station using Z-Wave, not your Wi-Fi.
- **Placement:** within 6 inches of your existing smoke or CO alarm, and within 3 inches for best results, with the arrow pointing toward the alarm.
- **Power:** a non-rechargeable 3-volt lithium battery that Ring says lasts up to 3 years.
- **Alerts** in the Ring app, with optional paid monitoring (Chapter 28).
- Ring says it works best with alarms that are **10 years old or less** and meet current standards.

STAY SAFE

A listener does not replace a working alarm

Ring states plainly that the listener does not detect fire, smoke or carbon monoxide. If the alarm next to it is dead, expired or missing a battery, the listener has nothing to hear. Keep testing the real alarm every month and replace it on time.

Is a listener right for you?

If you already have Ring Alarm and your alarms are fairly new, a listener is an inexpensive way to get phone alerts. If you don't have Ring Alarm, buying a whole security system just for this rarely makes sense; a Kidde smart alarm with Ring (Chapter 5) or an SC5 (Chapter 6) connects straight to Wi-Fi instead.

CHAPTER 9

Alexa and Smart Speakers That Listen for Alarms

If you have an Amazon **Echo** speaker, you may have heard it can listen for a smoke alarm. That's true, but the details changed. Amazon used to offer a free feature called **Alexa Guard**. Amazon has retired it. The ability to listen for the sound of a smoke or CO alarm (and glass breaking) and send a notification to your phone now comes with **Alexa Emergency Assist**, a paid subscription.

What to know before you pay for it

- **You still need real alarms.** The Echo only hears an alarm that is already sounding. It cannot sense smoke or CO.
- **The Echo has to be close.** Amazon says a supported Echo should be in the same room or space, near the alarm it's listening for.
- **It's not a monitoring service.** Amazon says Emergency Assist's sound detection is not professional monitoring. It notifies you; it doesn't send the fire department on its own.
- **It's a monthly or yearly subscription.** Prices and what's included can change, so check the current details in the Alexa app before you sign up.

FROM BILL

A friendly extra set of ears

Think of an Echo listening for alarms as a helpful heads-up, never a replacement for working smoke and CO alarms or a proper monitoring service. If you come across older instructions that mention Alexa Guard, they're out of date. I'm glad to help you decide whether Emergency Assist is worth it for your home.

CHAPTER 10

Hardwired, Battery, or 10-Year Sealed?

Every alarm needs power, and there are three common ways to get it. Each has its place, and the right one often depends on what your home already has.

Type	How it works
Hardwired	Connected to your home's electrical wiring, with a backup battery for power outages. Often wired together so they all sound at once. Common in newer homes.
Replaceable battery	Runs on batteries you change, such as a 9-volt, AA or CR123A. Easy to put up anywhere; you must change the batteries.
10-year sealed battery	A long-life lithium battery sealed inside. You never change it; you replace the whole alarm when it reaches the end of its life.

How to choose

- **If you have hardwired alarms now, replace them with hardwired alarms.** The wires are there for a reason, often building codes and interconnection.
- **If you're adding alarms where there's no wiring**, a battery or 10-year sealed alarm is the simple answer.
- **If changing batteries is hard for you** because of ladders or balance, a 10-year sealed alarm means no battery changes at all, only a test each month.

What the U.S. Fire Administration says about care

Alarm type	Care
9-volt battery alarm	Test monthly. Replace the batteries at least once a year. Replace the alarm every 10 years.
10-year sealed battery alarm	Test monthly. Replace the whole alarm according to the maker's instructions.
Hardwired alarm	Test monthly. Replace the backup battery at least once a year. Replace the alarm every 10 years.

STAY SAFE

Hardwired alarms are a job for a qualified electrician

The U.S. Fire Administration says only qualified electricians should install hardwired smoke alarms. Swapping a like-for-like alarm onto an existing plug can be simple, but anything involving new wiring or a ceiling box should go to an electrician. When in doubt, ask.

CHAPTER 11

Interconnection: When One Sounds, They All Sound

Interconnected alarms are linked so that when one detects danger, every alarm in the house sounds. If a fire starts in the basement at night, the alarm outside your bedroom goes off too, instead of only the one two floors down. The U.S. Fire Administration and the CPSC both recommend interconnected alarms.

Two ways alarms connect

Type	How it works
Wired interconnect	An extra wire runs between hardwired alarms. Common in homes built in the last few decades.
Wireless interconnect	Alarms talk to each other by radio. Good for older homes without the extra wire, and for battery alarms.

Smart alarms and interconnection

- Kidde's smart alarms interconnect with compatible Kidde alarms (Chapter 5).
- The First Alert SC5 interconnects with compatible First Alert alarms and with Nest Protects (Chapter 6).
- Nest Protects use their own wireless interconnect with each other.

HEADS UP

Brands usually don't mix

Interconnection generally works within one brand, and sometimes only within certain models. Before adding a new alarm to an interconnected system, check the maker's compatibility list. If they won't link, the new alarm still works on its own; it just won't set off the others.

TIP

Test the whole chain

When you test an interconnected alarm, walk through the house and make sure every alarm sounds. If one stays quiet, it may not be linked, or it may need attention.

CHAPTER 12

Shopping Wisely for Alarms

A few minutes of homework keeps you from buying the wrong alarm, or worse, a fake one. Here's what to look for.

Smoke sensor types

There are two basic kinds of smoke sensor. **Ionization** sensors are generally quicker with fast, flaming fires, and **photoelectric** sensors with slow, smoldering ones. Because nobody can predict what kind of fire might start, the U.S. Fire Administration recommends having both kinds, or **dual-sensor** alarms that contain both. The smart alarms in this guide use photoelectric smoke sensors with newer technology designed to reduce cooking nuisance alarms.

A quick shopping checklist

- **Smoke, CO, or both?** Match the alarm to the spot (Chapter 13 and Chapter 14).
- **Same power type** as the alarm you're replacing, especially for hardwired ones.
- **Same brand** if you want it to interconnect with your other alarms.
- **A safety listing.** Look for a mark from a recognized testing lab, such as UL or ETL, on the box or alarm.
- **A well-known maker** sold by a store you trust.
- **The app you want.** Kidde with Ring uses the Ring app; the SC5 uses First Alert's app and Google Home.

SCAM ALERT

Beware of bargain alarms from unknown online sellers

The CPSC has warned consumers to stop using several off-brand smoke and CO detectors sold online because they may fail to alert or create a fire hazard. A suspiciously cheap alarm with a brand name you've never heard of is not a bargain. Stick with established makers from stores you know.

TIP

Your fire department may help

The U.S. Fire Administration says some fire departments offer reduced-price or even free smoke alarms, and some will install battery alarms at no cost. Call your local fire department's non-emergency number to ask. You call them; they don't knock on your door unannounced (Chapter 31).

PART 3

Putting Alarms in the Right Places

Where smoke alarms and CO alarms belong, what you can install yourself, and getting a smart alarm connected to your phone.

CHAPTER 13

Where Smoke Alarms Go

A smoke alarm can only warn you about smoke that reaches it. Smoke in one part of the house may not reach an alarm somewhere else, especially behind a closed door. That's why the experts ask for alarms in several places, not just one in the hallway.

The rooms that need a smoke alarm

- **Inside every bedroom.**
- **Outside each separate sleeping area**, such as the hallway outside the bedrooms.
- **On every level of the home**, including the basement.

Where on the ceiling or wall

- **On the ceiling, or high on a wall.** Smoke rises. If you mount an alarm on the wall, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) says the top of the alarm should be no more than 12 inches below the ceiling.
- **Away from the stove.** NFPA guidance is to keep smoke alarms at least 10 feet from a cooking appliance to cut down on false alarms.
- **Away from drafts.** Kidde says to keep its alarms at least 3 feet from air ducts, vents, ceiling fans and fluorescent lights, which can blow smoke away or cause false alarms.
- **Follow your alarm's manual.** The U.S. Fire Administration says to check the maker's instructions for the best spot, because models differ.

TIP

Bathrooms and kitchens

Steam from a shower and smoke from the toaster are the two most common causes of false alarms. Don't put a smoke alarm right outside the bathroom door or directly over the stove. A few feet farther away makes a big difference.

GOOD TO KNOW

Combination alarms count twice

A combination smoke and CO alarm can fill a smoke alarm spot and a CO alarm spot at the same time. The hallway outside the bedrooms is the classic place for one.

CHAPTER 14

Where Carbon Monoxide Alarms Go

CO alarms are about protecting you while you sleep, because CO can make you drowsy and confused before you realize anything is wrong.

The places that need a CO alarm

- **In a central spot outside each separate sleeping area.**
- **On every level of your home.**
- Kidde adds that its basement counts as a level if you have one, and also recommends a CO alarm inside each bedroom for extra protection.

Where not to put one

- Kidde says to install CO alarms **at least 15 feet from fuel-burning appliances** such as the furnace or water heater, to avoid false alarms.
- Not in "dead air" spots, and not right next to a window or door.
- Never covered by furniture, curtains or decorations.
- Your alarm's manual has the final word on height and exact placement.

STAY SAFE

Fuel-burning appliance? Get a CO alarm

If your home has a furnace, gas water heater, gas stove, gas dryer, fireplace, wood stove, or an attached garage, it needs CO alarms. An all-electric home with no attached garage has less risk, but a portable generator or a car can still bring CO inside.

TIP

Have the furnace checked each fall

A CO alarm warns you about a problem; a yearly furnace and chimney check by a qualified technician helps prevent one. Our long Ohio heating season makes this especially worthwhile.

CHAPTER 15

Installing: What You Can Do Yourself

Putting up a battery alarm is a job many people can do with a screwdriver and a steady step stool. Hardwired alarms are different. Here's a sensible way to divide the work.

Usually fine to do yourself (with help holding the ladder)

- Mounting a **battery-powered** or **10-year sealed** alarm on its bracket.
- Twisting a new alarm onto an existing bracket.
- Placing a **listener** next to an existing alarm (Chapter 8).

Call an electrician

- Anything involving **new wiring** or a new ceiling box.
- Replacing hardwired alarms if you're not certain how to turn off the right breaker.
- Any alarm where the wires look damaged, scorched or loose.

Steps for a battery alarm

1. Read the quick-start guide that came in the box. Note any special steps, such as setting it up in the app **before** you mount it.
2. Pull the battery tab, if it has one. Kidde says its alarms beep once to confirm they're on.
3. Hold the bracket in place and mark the screw holes. Use the anchors that came in the box.
4. Screw the bracket up, then twist the alarm onto it until it clicks or locks.
5. Press the test button, standing back or covering your ears. Alarms are very loud.
6. Write the install date and the replace-by date in Chapter 33.

STAY SAFE

Ladders deserve respect

Falls from ladders and step stools are a real risk. Have someone hold the ladder, wear sturdy shoes, and never stand on the top step or on a chair. If a ladder isn't safe for you, that's a perfectly good reason to ask a family member, your fire department, or me.

HEADS UP

Keep the dust cover on during remodeling — then take it off

Some alarms come with a dust cover for construction work. Ring's Kidde help page warns that the alarm will not work with the dust cover in place. Remove it before anyone lives in the space.

CHAPTER 16

Setting Up the App

The smart part of a smart alarm starts with a one-time setup in the app. It usually takes 10 to 20 minutes per alarm. Have your Wi-Fi name and password handy before you start.

Kidde smart alarm in the Ring app

1. Download the free **Ring** app and sign in or create an account. Make sure it's up to date.
2. For a wired Kidde alarm, connect it to power first; Kidde says household power is required for Wi-Fi setup.
3. In the Ring app, tap **Set Up a Device** at the bottom of the screen.
4. Scan the QR code on the back of the alarm when the app asks.
5. Follow the steps in the app. Choose your **2.4 GHz** Wi-Fi network and enter the password.

First Alert SC5, then Google Home

1. Open the First Alert app and select **Add Device**. Don't mount the alarm yet.
2. Pull the battery tab and follow the alarm's voice prompts.
3. Scan the QR code, then give the alarm its location and the name it will announce, such as "Hallway."
4. Connect it to your Wi-Fi and wait for the message that it registered.
5. Mount it on the ceiling (recommended), or on a wall within 12 inches of the ceiling.
6. If you have a Nest Protect, tap **Link**. Then open the Google Home app, sign in, and follow the prompts to add the alarm and assign it to a room.

TIP

Name each alarm by its room

When the app asks for a name, use the room: "Upstairs Hall," "Basement," "Mom's Bedroom." When an alert comes in, you'll know at a glance where to look.

GOOD TO KNOW

Keep the app's notifications turned on

A smart alarm can only alert your phone if the app is allowed to send notifications. If you ever turned notifications off for the Ring, First Alert or Google Home app, turn them back on in your phone's settings.

If you're building out a larger smart home around these alarms, our *Building a Smart Home* guide walks through hubs, apps and Wi-Fi.

PART 4

Living With Your Alarms

Monthly tests, batteries, those mysterious chirps, replacement dates, cleaning, and phone alerts that reach the right people.

CHAPTER 17

Testing Every Month

The U.S. Fire Administration, the CPSC and the NFPA all agree: test your alarms **every month**. A test takes seconds and is the only way to know an alarm will actually sound. Some makers ask for more often: Ring's help page for Kidde smart alarms says to test every week. Follow your alarm's manual.

How to test an alarm

1. Let everyone in the house know you're testing, so nobody is startled.
2. Stand back a few feet, or cover your ears. The alarm is meant to be loud enough to wake you.
3. Press and hold the **Test** button until the alarm sounds, usually a few seconds.
4. If your alarms are interconnected, walk through the house and listen for all of them.
5. If an alarm doesn't sound, try fresh batteries (if it uses replaceable ones) and test again. If it still doesn't sound, replace that alarm right away.

TIP

Testing from the app

Some smart alarms can run a test from the phone. On a Nest Protect, Google calls this a **Safety Checkup**: in the Google Home app, tap the Smoke & CO alarm tile, choose the alarm, then tap **Run Safety Check**. It checks the sensors, Wi-Fi, power, speaker, horn and light ring. Either way, listen for the sound in person.

FROM BILL

Pick a day and stick to it

Tie the test to something you already do each month: the first of the month, the day a bill arrives, or the day you change the calendar page. A phone reminder works well too.

CHAPTER 18

Batteries and Low-Battery Alerts

A smoke alarm with a dead or missing battery is the same as no alarm at all, as the U.S. Fire Administration puts it. Good battery habits keep that from ever happening.

When to change batteries

- **Replaceable-battery alarms:** at least once a year (USFA and CPSC), and right away when the alarm or app says the battery is low.
- **Hardwired alarms:** replace the backup battery at least once a year.
- **10-year sealed alarms:** you don't change the battery. When it runs down, the whole alarm is replaced.

Smart alarms give you a head start

This is one of the nicest everyday benefits of a smart alarm. Instead of a chirp in the middle of the night, your phone tells you ahead of time. Kidde says its Ring-connected alarms give about 7 days' notice in the Ring app before the batteries get low enough to chirp. The SC5 also sends low-battery notices in the app.

HEADS UP

Use the battery the manual names

Not every alarm takes the same batteries. Kidde's wired smart alarms name specific AA batteries and say not to use lithium ones; the SC5 Battery takes six CR123A lithium batteries. Check the label inside the battery door or the manual before you buy.

CHAPTER 19

Chirps: What That Little Beep Means

A short **chirp** every so often is not an alarm. It's the alarm asking for attention. The trick is finding out which alarm is chirping and why.

Common reasons for a chirp

Reason	What to do
Low battery	The most common cause. Replace the battery (or, for a sealed alarm, the alarm).
End of life	The alarm has reached its replace-by date. A new battery won't stop it. Replace the alarm (Chapter 20).
Needs cleaning	Dust in the sensor. Ring's help page says three chirps every 60 seconds on a Kidde smart alarm means it needs cleaning (Chapter 21).
Sensor problem	The alarm has found a fault in itself. Check the app or manual; usually it needs replacing.

GOOD TO KNOW

Each brand's chirp means something a little different

The number of chirps and how often they come vary from brand to brand and model to model. The manual, or a sticker on the alarm, has the decoder. Smart alarms make it easier: open the app, or press the button on a talking alarm, and it will usually tell you exactly what's wrong.

Finding the one that's chirping

1. Stand in the middle of a hallway and wait for the chirp. Chirps are short and hard to place, so be patient.
2. Move toward the sound and wait for the next chirp. Repeat until you're under the alarm.
3. Look for a light on the alarm that blinks with the chirp.
4. Check the app on a smart alarm. It usually names the room.

STAY SAFE

Never stop a chirp by removing the battery and walking away

It's tempting at 3 a.m. But an alarm without a battery can't protect you. If you can't fix it right away, replace the battery with a fresh one, or replace the alarm the next morning. If a chirping alarm must come down, put up a working one in its place the same day.

CHAPTER 20

The End-of-Life Chirp and Replacement Dates

Alarms don't last forever. Their sensors wear out, even if the alarm still seems fine. Every alarm has a lifespan, and when it reaches the end, it's designed to tell you by chirping in a way that a new battery won't fix.

How long alarms last

Alarm	Replace when
Smoke alarms	Replace 10 years from the **manufacture date**, not the day you installed it (USFA).
CO alarms	Follow the maker. Kidde says its CO alarms made since 2013 last 10 years, and older ones made before 2013 were 7-year alarms. Others vary, so check the label.
Nest Protect (2nd gen)	10 years from the manufacture date (Google).

Find the date on your alarm

1. Twist the alarm off its bracket. For a wired alarm, turn off its breaker first, or ask for help.
2. Look on the back for a **date of manufacture** or a **Replace by** date.
3. If there's no date at all, the alarm is very likely past its life. Replace it.
4. Write the replace-by date on the alarm with a marker and in Chapter 33.

STAY SAFE

An expired CO alarm is not protecting you

Kidde warns that its CO alarms do not detect carbon monoxide once they're in end-of-life mode. When an alarm reaches its end, replace it right away. Don't wait for the chirping to become a habit.

TIP

Replace them all together

If you installed all your alarms at the same time, they'll all expire around the same time. Replacing them together keeps the dates simple and makes sure interconnected alarms are all compatible.

CHAPTER 21

Cleaning and Care

Dust and cobwebs inside an alarm can cause false alarms or slow it down. A gentle cleaning keeps it working well.

How to clean an alarm

1. Use a vacuum with a soft brush attachment, or a can of compressed air, on all the openings.
2. Wipe the outside with a dry cloth.
3. Don't use water, sprays or cleaning liquids on an alarm.
4. Press the test button afterward to make sure it still works.

How often

Ring's help page for Kidde smart alarms says to clean at least once a year, more often in dusty homes or homes with pets, and again after moving in. First Alert asks SC5 owners to dust or gently vacuum the alarm monthly. Your manual has the schedule for your model.

HEADS UP

Paint and sprays can ruin a sensor

Google lists cleaning solvents, paint, air fresheners, hair spray and other aerosols among the things that can damage a Nest Protect's sensors, and the same is true of alarms in general. Never paint an alarm. Cover it while painting the ceiling, then uncover it the same day.

CHAPTER 22

Phone Alerts: Getting Them and Sharing Them

The phone alert is the heart of a smart alarm. It's worth a few minutes to make sure the alerts reach you, and the people who'd help you.

Make sure alerts get through

- **Notifications on.** In your phone's settings, allow notifications for the alarm's app.
- **Critical or emergency alerts.** Some apps offer a special kind of alert that sounds even when the phone is on silent or Do Not Disturb. If your app offers it, consider turning it on.
- **Stay signed in.** If you change phones, sign back into the alarm's app on the new one.
- **Run a test now and then** and confirm the alert reaches your phone.

Sharing alerts with family

This is often the most valuable smart feature for seniors who live alone. The Ring app lets the account owner invite family members. Ring says no subscription is needed to add shared users. Ring's permission levels matter here: according to Ring's help page, the **Standard** and **Advanced** levels receive real-time notifications, but the **Limited** level does not. The "Ways Your Smart Alarms Can Make Life Easier" topic walks through the steps.

Google Home also lets you invite household members to your home in the app, and First Alert's app has its own sharing options. For families looking after a parent, our *Protecting an Aging Parent* and *Medical Alerts & Fall Detection* guides cover the bigger picture.

FROM BILL

Decide in advance who does what

An alert on a daughter's phone in another state only helps if she knows what to do. Agree ahead of time: she calls you first, and if you don't answer, she calls a neighbor with a key and the emergency number for your town. (Calling 911 from her phone reaches the dispatcher where *she* is, so give her your local fire department's number too.) Write the plan down and keep it by the phone.

PART 5

When an Alarm Goes Off

What to do, in order, when a smoke or CO alarm sounds; the symptoms to know; your escape plan; false alarms; and alerts that come while you're away.

CHAPTER 23

If the Smoke Alarm Sounds: Get Out, Call 911

STAY SAFE

The rule: get out, stay out, call 911

When a smoke alarm sounds and you don't know why, treat it as a real fire. Get everyone out of the house. Call 911 from outside. Don't go back in for anything, not a pet, not a purse, not a phone.

The U.S. Fire Administration warns that when you hear a smoke alarm, you may have less than two minutes to get everyone outside. That's not much time, which is why it helps to know the steps by heart.

What to do, in order

1. Shout "Fire!" to wake others, and head for your nearest way out.
2. If there's smoke, get low and go under it. The cleaner air is near the floor.
3. Before opening a closed door, touch it with the back of your hand. If it's hot, use another way out.
4. Close doors behind you if you can. A closed door slows smoke and fire.
5. Go to your family's meeting spot outside (Chapter 25).
6. Call 911 from outside, using a cell phone or a neighbor's phone.
7. Stay out until firefighters say it's safe to go back in.

GOOD TO KNOW

Your smart alarm can tell you the room

Many smart and talking alarms announce where the smoke is, such as "Smoke in the kitchen." That helps you choose the way out that avoids it. But don't spend time checking the app first. Get out, then look.

STAY SAFE

If it's a small kitchen fire you can see

If you're sure the alarm is from burnt food and there's no fire, see Chapter 26 for clearing the air. If anything is actually burning and you're not certain you can safely put it out, leave and call 911. Fire spreads faster than most people expect.

CHAPTER 24

If the CO Alarm Sounds — and the Symptoms to Know

STAY SAFE

The rule: fresh air first, then call 911

When a CO alarm sounds, get everyone outside to fresh air right away, including pets. Then call 911 from outside. Don't stay inside to look for the cause.

Because you can't see or smell carbon monoxide, the alarm may be your only warning. The CPSC advises that if you suspect CO poisoning, you get outside to fresh air immediately, and then call 911.

The symptoms of CO poisoning

The CPSC lists these symptoms. They're easy to mistake for the flu, a cold, or simply feeling tired, which is part of what makes CO so dangerous:

- Headache
- Dizziness
- Weakness
- Nausea or vomiting
- Sleepiness
- Confusion

HEADS UP

Clues that point to CO, not the flu

Be suspicious if several people in the home (or pets) feel sick at the same time, if you feel better after leaving the house and worse when you come back, or if symptoms appear when the furnace, a fireplace or a generator is running.

What to do, in order

1. Get everyone, including pets, outside to fresh air.
2. Call 911 from outside. Tell them a CO alarm went off, and mention anyone who feels sick.
3. Don't go back in until the fire department or a qualified technician says it's safe.

4. Before using the appliance again, have a qualified technician find and fix the cause.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> **Don't open the windows and stay inside**
>
> Opening a window or two does not make the home safe while you're still in it. The safe place is outside, in fresh air. Let the fire department check the house and tell you when to go back in.

Many CO alarms can be hushed for a short time with the button, and Google's help pages note a Nest Protect's CO alarm can be silenced. But hushing it doesn't make the air safe. If CO is still present, the alarm is designed to sound again. Silence is for after you're safely outside, never instead of leaving.

CHAPTER 25

Your Home Escape Plan

An alarm gives you warning; a plan tells you what to do with it. Making one takes about 20 minutes and a sheet of paper.

Make your plan

1. Draw a simple map of your home. Mark every door and window.
2. For each bedroom, mark two ways out if possible: the door and a window.
3. Make sure windows open easily and aren't painted shut or blocked by furniture.
4. Choose a meeting spot outside, a safe distance from the house: a mailbox, a tree, a neighbor's driveway.
5. Decide who will help anyone who needs it: a grandchild, a spouse who uses a walker, a pet.
6. Practice it. Walk the routes at least twice a year, including once at night.

FROM BILL

If getting out quickly is hard for you

If you use a walker or wheelchair, or have trouble with stairs, sleep on the ground floor if you can, keep a phone, glasses and a flashlight by the bed, and tell your local fire department's non-emergency line. They're glad to know who might need extra help.

TIP

Phone by the bed

Keep your cell phone charged on the nightstand. It's your way to call 911 from outside, and it's where your smart alarm's alert will show up.

CHAPTER 26

False Alarms and Nuisance Alarms

A false alarm from burnt toast or shower steam is annoying, but it's a sign the alarm works. The goal is to quiet it safely and reduce how often it happens, never to disable it.

STAY SAFE

Never take the battery out to stop false alarms

The U.S. Fire Administration is blunt about it: disabling a smoke alarm or removing the battery can be a deadly mistake. The same goes for covering an alarm with a bag or tape. Use the hush button instead.

When the alarm goes off while cooking or showering

Only if you're certain there's no fire, the U.S. Fire Administration suggests:

1. Open a window or door and press the alarm's **hush** (or silence) button.
2. Wave a towel at the alarm to clear the air.
3. If it keeps happening, move the alarm several feet farther from the kitchen or bathroom.

Hushing from your phone

Some smart alarms let you hush a nuisance alarm from the app, but only when you're nearby. Google says a 2nd-generation Nest Protect can be silenced from the app only when you're within a few feet of the Protect that sounded, with Bluetooth on. Google also notes an industry rule that applies to all smoke alarms: if smoke levels are too high, the alarm can't be silenced.

Other causes of false alarms

- **Dust or bugs** in the sensor. Clean it (Chapter 21).
- **An alarm too close** to the stove, a bathroom, a vent or a fan. Move it (Chapter 13).
- **An old alarm** near or past its replace-by date. Replace it (Chapter 20).
- **Construction dust** from sanding or drywall. Clean the alarm afterward.

TIP

Newer alarms help

Kidde and First Alert both say their newest alarms are designed to reduce nuisance alarms from cooking. If an old alarm keeps going off at dinnertime, replacing it may fix the problem for good.

CHAPTER 27

When an Alert Comes While You're Away

It's one of the big reasons people buy smart alarms: your phone buzzes with "Smoke detected at Home" while you're out. It's frightening. Having a plan ahead of time helps you act calmly.

What to do

1. Open the alert. Note which alarm and which room, and whether it says smoke or CO.
2. If anyone might be home, call them right away.
3. If you can't reach anyone, or you have any doubt, call 911 and give your full home address. If you're far from home, call your town's fire department or emergency dispatch number directly.
4. If you have cameras, a quick look at the live view can help, but don't let it delay the call.
5. Call a trusted neighbor who can look from outside. They should not go in.
6. Don't rush into the house yourself when you get there. Let the fire department check it.

GOOD TO KNOW

A cleared alert isn't always the all-clear

If the alarm stops on its own, that may just mean the smoke cleared, or the alarm lost power. When in doubt, have someone check in person.

FROM BILL

Keep the numbers you'd need in your phone

Save your local fire department's direct number and a neighbor's number in your phone now, while it's calm. When you're away from home, that saves precious minutes.

PART 6

Extra Protection, Renters, and Scams

Paid monitoring, alarms for hearing loss and for an aging parent, notes for renters and landlords, and the scams that target alarm owners.

CHAPTER 28

Monitoring Services: Are They Worth It?

A **monitoring service** is a company that watches your alarms around the clock. When an alarm goes off, trained agents act on it, even if you're asleep, away, or can't get to the phone. It costs a monthly fee.

Ring's Smoke & CO Pro Monitoring

- **Price:** Ring lists it at $5.00 a month or $50 a year, and it's included in some of Ring's higher plans. One subscription covers all eligible devices at one location.
- **Works with:** Kidde smart alarms with Ring, a Ring Alarm system with a Smoke & CO Listener, or a compatible First Alert smoke and CO alarm paired with Ring Alarm.
- **For smoke:** an agent calls your emergency contacts to confirm. If no one answers, the agent requests the fire department.
- **For CO:** an agent requests the fire department right away and notifies your emergency contacts.
- **Limits:** U.S. homes only (not businesses). Ring notes local permit or false-alarm fees may apply where you live.
- **Event history:** 24 hours free; 60 days with the plan.

Who benefits most

- People who live alone, especially if they sleep soundly or have hearing loss.
- Homes that sit empty for weeks, such as during a winter away.
- Families who can't always answer the phone at work.

FROM BILL

Honest math

If someone is almost always home and everyone can hear the alarms, monitoring adds less. If you live alone or travel, a few dollars a month for someone to call the fire department when you can't is one of the better values in home safety. Other security companies also offer smoke and CO monitoring; compare the price and contract length before you sign. Avoid long contracts you can't cancel.

HEADS UP

Keep your emergency contacts up to date

Monitoring works only as well as the phone numbers on file. Check them in the app once a year and whenever someone moves or changes numbers.

CHAPTER 29

Alarms for Hearing Loss and for an Aging Parent

A standard alarm assumes you'll hear it. If hearing is fading, or you take hearing aids out at night, that assumption may not hold.

Alarms for people with hearing loss

The U.S. Fire Administration notes there are alarms made for people with hearing loss, with strobe lights that flash and/or devices that vibrate to wake someone who can't hear a standard alarm. A bed shaker under the pillow or mattress is a common choice. A smart alarm adds another layer: the alert can reach a family member's phone too.

TIP

Test with your hearing aids out

Some night, before bed and with your hearing aids out, have someone press the test button while you're in bed with the door closed. If you can't hear it clearly, it's time to add a strobe or bed shaker.

Looking after a parent who lives alone

- **Put a smart alarm outside their bedroom** and invite yourself as a shared user so you get the alerts (Chapter 22).
- **Consider monitoring** so help is sent even if you're in a meeting or asleep (Chapter 28).
- **Choose 10-year sealed alarms** so they never need to climb a ladder to change batteries.
- **Agree on the plan**: who calls whom, and who has a key.
- **Pair with a medical alert** for falls and health emergencies. Our *Medical Alerts & Fall Detection* guide explains the options.

FROM BILL

Respect and reassurance

Talk it over with your parent first. Most people welcome a smart alarm once they understand it doesn't watch or listen to them; it only speaks up when there's smoke, CO, or a low battery.

CHAPTER 30

Notes for Renters and Landlords

The U.S. Fire Administration says installing smoke alarms in every bedroom, outside each sleeping area and on every level is a precaution all homeowners *and landlords* need to take. Exactly who is responsible for what depends on your lease and on state and local codes.

If you rent

- **Test the alarms** every month, just like a homeowner.
- **Report problems in writing** right away: a missing alarm, one that won't test, or one past its replace-by date. Keep a copy.
- **Don't remove or disable** an alarm the landlord installed, even a chirping one. Report it.
- **Ask before adding a smart alarm.** A battery smart alarm or a CO alarm you buy can usually go up with permission, and you can take it with you when you move. Leave the landlord's alarms in place.
- **Check your lease** to see who changes batteries.

If you're a landlord

- Install alarms in every required location, and CO alarms where there are fuel-burning appliances or an attached garage.
- Replace them by their replace-by dates and between tenants if they're near the end of their life.
- Consider 10-year sealed alarms, which tenants can't easily take batteries out of.
- Check your local building and fire codes, which set the exact requirements.

GOOD TO KNOW

Codes vary by town

Requirements for rental homes differ from place to place. Your city or county building department or local fire marshal can tell you what applies to your property.

CHAPTER 31

Scams: Door-to-Door "Inspections" and Fake Alarms

Because alarms are about safety, scammers use fear to make a sale. Here are the tricks to watch for.

The door-to-door "inspector"

Someone knocks, says they're from "the fire safety department" or "working with your fire department," and needs to inspect your alarms. They then announce that your alarms are illegal or unsafe and offer to sell you new ones on the spot, often at high prices or with a monitoring contract.

SCAM ALERT

Fire departments don't sell alarms door to door

A real fire department program is something *you* arrange by calling the non-emergency number. If someone shows up uninvited, don't let them in. Ask for a name and call your fire department's non-emergency number yourself (not a number they give you) to check. Never pay at the door.

Other scams to watch for

- **High-pressure monitoring contracts**, sold door to door or by phone, with long terms and steep cancellation fees.
- **Fake "recall" calls or emails** that ask for payment or personal details to "replace" your alarm. Check real recalls at cpsc.gov or the maker's own website.
- **Pop-ups or texts** claiming your smart alarm has been "hacked" and you must pay for support. Close them; call the maker using the number on its official website.
- **Bargain alarms from unknown sellers** online (Chapter 12).

SCAM ALERT

The phone-support scam

If you search online for "Ring support" or "Nest support," fake help lines sometimes appear at the top. Real companies won't ask you to pay with gift cards or let a stranger take control of your computer. Use the help pages and phone numbers on the maker's official site or in the app.

FROM BILL

When in doubt, hang up and call me

If anyone pressures you about your alarms, by phone or at the door, you can always say, "I'll check with my tech person first." Then call me at (330) 200-8042. A legitimate offer will still be there tomorrow.

PART 7

When to Call Bill & Your Cheat-Sheet

An honest word about when a hand is worth it, and a one-page summary to keep by the phone.

CHAPTER 32

When to Call Bill

I've written this guide so you can handle most of your alarms on your own. But part of being helpful is being honest about when a hand saves you time, worry or a wobbly ladder, so here's my straight advice.

Good reasons to call

- **Choosing alarms** for your home: how many, which kind, smart or ordinary, and which app fits what you already have.
- **Getting the phone alerts working**: Wi-Fi, the Ring, First Alert or Google Home app, notifications, and sharing alerts with family.
- **Replacing a Nest Protect** with the First Alert SC5 and linking it to Google Home.
- **Setting up alerts for a parent** who lives alone, so the right people hear about trouble.
- **A chirp you can't track down**, or alarms that won't stop false-alarming.
- **A second opinion** on a monitoring contract or a door-to-door offer before you sign anything.

For wiring work, I'll always tell you honestly when a licensed electrician is the right call, and for anything to do with a gas appliance or a CO alarm that went off, a qualified heating technician and your fire department come first.

SCAM ALERT

Real help never cold-calls

Real help never cold-calls, knocks unannounced, or demands remote access to your computer. If someone contacts you out of the blue about your alarms, your account or a "problem" with your home, hang up or close the door, and call a number you already trust.

What working with me is like

I work at your pace, here in Portage County, with no rushing and no talking down. I explain what I'm doing in plain words, and I'll always tell you honestly when a gadget or a subscription isn't worth your money. That's been my way for more than 30 years.

FROM BILL

How to reach me

Call or text **(330) 200-8042**, or book at **billshometech.com/book**. When you call the main line, my assistant **Sophie** may answer and help you find a time. My help is **$49 remote · $99 in your home**. These guides are free to read and share.

Thank you for taking the time to look after your home and the people in it. Test your alarms, keep your plan handy, and remember I'm only a phone call away.

— Bill

CHAPTER 33

Your Smoke & CO Cheat-Sheet

Print this page and keep it handy by the phone. The whole guide, boiled down.

If an alarm goes off

What happened	Do this
Smoke alarm	Get everyone out. Stay out. Call 911 from outside.
CO alarm	Get everyone to fresh air outside. Call 911 from outside.
Alert on your phone while away	Call anyone at home; if no answer, call for help to your address.
Burnt toast, no fire	Open a window, press hush, wave a towel. Never remove the battery.

I want to...

I want to...	Do this
Test an alarm	Press and hold Test monthly. Stand back. Check all interconnected alarms sound.
Stop a chirp	Find the alarm; check the app or manual; replace the battery or the alarm.
Find a replace-by date	Look on the back of the alarm, or in the app's device information.
Share alerts with family	Invite them in the alarm's app (Ring: Standard level gets alerts).
Replace a Nest Protect	Use the First Alert SC5; set it up in First Alert's app, then Google Home.
Add alerts to old alarms	Ring Alarm owners: a Smoke & CO Listener within 6 inches.
Get help sent when I can't	Consider monitoring (Ring lists $5.00 a month or $50 a year).

Write these down

Keep handy	
Alarm locations (rooms)	_____
Smoke alarm replace-by dates	_____
CO alarm replace-by dates	_____
Battery type each alarm uses	_____
Alarm app and account email	_____

Keep handy	
Who gets the alerts	_____
Outside meeting spot	_____
Fire department non-emergency number	_____
Neighbor with a key	_____
Monthly test day	_____

FROM BILL

Bill's Home Tech

Questions about your alarms? Call or text **(330) 200-8042** or book at **billshometech.com/book**. **$49 remote · $99 in your home**.