

Fixing My Smoke Alarm - How It Took Me All Day to Fix a Ten-Minute Problem

I came home to my place on Sienna Way a few weeks ago and found that the smoke alarm was beeping. I figured that the battery was running low, so I dragged out my ladder, crawled up to the ceiling, and removed the old battery. Naturally, I didn't have any new ones, so I trekked off to the hardware store to buy a few. Then, I clambered up to the ceiling again and put in the new battery. Success!

Not quite... The beeping continued.

I removed and replaced the new battery a few times just to make sure it was installed properly. The beeps still sounded.

It was clear that desperate measures would be required – I would have to read the owner's manual. I looked in the box of documents that came with the condo...no smoke alarm manual. So, I crawled up to the ceiling again and got the model number. (First Alert/BRK SC9120B) Then, using the magic of Google, I found the document on the manufacturer's web site.

I soon discovered that the alarm wasn't beeping – it was “chirping.” More than that, it was sounding three quick chirps, repeated about once a minute. The manual clearly stated: “Unit has malfunctioned. Replace immediately.”

A little more Googling determined that the Ace Hardware on Northland Avenue had the same model smoke detector in stock, listed at \$45. That seemed pricey so I grumbled a bit but prepared to head out to buy one.

Then, I had an inspiration. The owner's manual said that the smoke detector had a ten-year warranty and it gave an 800-number for service. I had no receipt and no date of purchase but I figured that I had nothing to lose, so I gave them a call.

It was Friday night and I wasn't expecting much. A knowledgeable person at First Alert answered right away! He asked for the model number and the date code printed on the bottom of the detector and quickly determined that the unit was under warranty. **It would be replaced for nothing!** A new smoke alarm arrived in UPS in a few days. Thank you, First Alert!

Bottom line: If you have a First Alert SC9120B smoke detector that was installed by Apple Tree **less than ten years ago** and it starts chirping three times every minute, don't mess with it. **Get it down off the ceiling so you can see the date code and call First Alert at 800-323-9005**. They'll send you a new one for free.

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