

Replace Smoke/CO Alarms

[Pete Matthews, Jr.](#) – <https://3nt.xyz> – © January 16, 2021

All the units at Canton Point should have interconnected smoke alarm systems. Three of the devices in our unit failed in the same week; this is normal and to be expected. This is my experience as a resident of the Canton Point Condominium, replacing his own alarms. Your mileage may vary.

Heat Alarm in the Garage

Last June, the Heat alarm in our garage failed. Because of the car exhaust, a normal smoke detector cannot be used in a garage. After some research, I ordered a First Alert replacement from Amazon:

<https://smile.amazon.com/gp/product/B000Q6LXW2>

This page now says the product is made by BRK – they own First Alert now – and it is model **HD6135FB**. It is out of stock at Amazon and the First Alert store ☹

This replacement has given us no trouble. It requires a 9V backup battery. It is *interconnectable*, meaning that, when connected by wire to other units (as those at Canton Point are), when one device alarms, all will sound. It has a 10 year limited warranty. When I installed mine, I had to change the mounting plate, using the one that came with the new device.

I also turned off the power in the basement, removed the old wire connector in the ceiling, and connected up the new one. The connectors may have been identical, making this a wasted effort.

Combination Smoke & Carbon Monoxide (CO) Alarms

On January 13, 2021, around 10 PM, the smoke/CO alarm in the basement started to repeatedly emit five beeps, a minute apart. These devices include a timer, and this signaled the device had reached end of life. I twisted the device counter-clockwise off its mount, unplugged the wire from the back of the device, and removed the backup batteries. (If the wire is clipped in, push a flat-head screwdriver between the plug and the clip, twisting as needed.) So far, so good.

At 4 AM, all the alarms went off, announcing Smoke, Evacuate. There was no smoke in the house. If this happens to you, it can supposedly be turned off by pushing the test button, although you may need to go to the specific device. I

did not know this, so my ears rang for a day - the alarm went on for 10-15 years 😊 or maybe minutes.

Deciding to replace all of the old alarms, I spent the next morning researching. Once I placed my order, I went down to the mailbox. By the time I was back, the alarm in the loft was emitting 5 beeps a minute. I removed that device from service as well. The third such unit ended a day or two later.

The top competitors in this market are Kidde and First Alert (BRK). These devices appear to use different connectors, so switching brands will require conversion cables or wiring in new connector cables. The brands do not mention each other in their advertising or materials, so you cannot be absolutely sure conversion cables will actually work with competing products. Furthermore, devices from different vendors probably will not play well with each other, when interconnected as at Canton Point. The deal is, pick one brand and use it. I have elected to stay with First Alert, the brand that was already installed.

All six of our devices are hardwired and interconnected: if one sounds, they all sound. They all use AC power with battery backup. Furthermore, the units are all ALARMS - they sound - not just detectors. By the way, if you hear FOUR beeps, that is a carbon monoxide alert.

Ordering Replacement Smoke Alarms

Our unit has three combination Smoke and Carbon Monoxide (CO) alarms, one in the common space on each floor. The third of these failed two days after the others; all were made in April 2013. These devices feature: both Smoke and CO alarms, voice alarms, hardwired with two-AA battery backup. The replacement device that I found can be programmed to indicate which unit has issued the alarm. (If the old devices had this feature, I missed it, or it was not enabled.)

The remaining alarms are smoke-only, without voice alerts. We have one in each of our two bedrooms; I would expect you to also have one in any third bedroom. These are hardwired, backed up by one 9V battery. The replacement devices will show a red indicator, on the device that initiated an alarm. This is not as good as voice, but may be good enough – and having more voice alarms next to the others could be confusing.

Our current devices do not sport usable part numbers. All the new parts I selected have ten year warranties. The timers should start when power is first applied to the devices. The best deal I found was at Lowes, with free shipping. Here is what I ordered:

Shipping Item(s)

BRK AC Hardwired Combination Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detector with Voice Alert	QTY
	3

Item #: 1325107 | Model #: SC7010BV

Unit Price \$50.98 | Subtotal \$152.94

Shipping Method – Standard 1 - 8 Business Days

AC Hardwired 120-Volt Smoke Detector	QTY
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Item #: 986233 Model #: 1039808-SA9120BPCN-6	2
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Unit Price \$15.28 | Subtotal \$30.56

Shipping Method – Standard 1 - 8 Business Days

On the Lowes, Amazon or other site, look for part numbers **SC7010BV** and **SA9120BPCN**. With free shipping, the total damage, including tax, was \$194.97.

The shipment was via FedEx. I checked FedEx tracking periodically, and it arrived in the afternoon of January 16 – the amazingly good initial estimate was correct – only two days!

Installation of Smoke/CO Alarms

These instructions assume you have only First Alert (BRK) devices installed and are replacing them only with First Alert (BRK) devices.

The box for a combination alarm says BRK, but the device says First Alert. The contents are:

CO warning labels

Dust cover for construction (like a shower cap)

Folded yellow manual (foreign language)

3-wire power & interconnect cable

Folded white manual (English)

Alarm unit with attached mounting plate; two AA batteries installed

1. Open the manual and write the Date Purchased, Where Purchased, Date Installed, and Replacement Date (10 years later) in the spaces provided.
2. Read relevant sections of the manual. Set it aside for reference and to keep, along with your invoice.
3. Remove the mounting plate from the device by twisting. That ring and parts other than the device may not be needed. Return them to the small box, and put that box into the shipping box to decide about later.
4. DO NOT INSTALL the device into the ceiling yet.
5. Consider the best name for the location of this device from the list of possibilities in both the manual and device, repeated here:

Basement	Living Room	Family Room	Office
Kitchen	Dining Room	No Location	Hallway
Child's BR	Master BR	Guest BR	Utility Room

Since none of these devices will be installed in a bedroom (that's where the smoke-only devices go), I feel it is a mistake to pick any of the bedroom (BR) choices for a combo device.

6. READ and UNDERSTAND the rest of the instructions that follow. If you are prepared, it's easy; otherwise, it will be loud and frustrating. Put on hearing protectors, if you have them.
7. Grasp the unit in your hand, so that the heel of your palm covers the vents on the face of the unit. Keep your hand this way for the entire configuration, to muffle the sound.
8. Pull out the clear tab that activates the factory-installed batteries.
9. The device will announce itself, say it is not configured, and then say to press and hold the button to configure the device. **PRESS AND HOLD THE BUTTON IMMEDIATELY.**

If you miss your chance, the device will talk about testing. Do not do that. Instead, slide open the battery compartment, wait a bit, and **SLIDE IT CLOSED** again. (If necessary, in the middle, remove one battery enough to definitely break the connection.)

10. The device will start to read off the possible room names. When you hear the room you want, even as it speaks, **IMMEDIATELY** press and hold the button. If you miss it, wait until it comes around again.
11. The device will ask you to test – don't subject yourself to that. The device will go silent when you do nothing.

12. The cable in the ceiling is keyed so that it can go into the device only one way. Insert it until it clicks.
13. Apply the back of the device to the mounting plate (note the slots) and twist it clockwise into place.

Proceed to install the other two Smoke/CO devices in the same way.

Testing

Now is the time to test: hold the button on one device until it makes a noise. It won't be loud yet, so get down promptly, before covering your ears. All interconnected devices should sound. At one point, the device you tested should identify itself by room name, while testing all the possible alarms. When the alarms go silent, you are all set.

Installation of Smoke Alarms in Bedrooms

All these devices now have 10-year timers. Wait for a week or two before installing the smoke-only devices. Ten years from now, this will provide a gap between failures, to provide some coverage while waiting for new devices.

Since I am waiting, I cannot report on how this went. Installing these devices should be easier, since there is no configuration for these alarms. I'll update this section with any new information.