



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

A Simple Step That Can Save Lives

SENATOR PATTY RITCHIE February 21, 2019

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Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

Across our region—and beyond—people are continuing to offer thoughts and prayers for a father and his four daughters who recently lost their lives in a City of Watertown house fire.

The brave firefighters and other emergency responders who were at the scene on the morning of the fire say it was one of the most tragic they had ever seen. They also hope that this fire can help save lives in the future by serving as a reminder, the importance of having several working smoke detectors in every home.

Smoke detectors are vital in keeping you and your family safe in the event of a fire. By providing an early warning of danger, working smoke alarms reduce your risk of dying in a fire by 50 percent. Simply put, they save lives.

The New York State Association of Fire Chiefs recommends smoke detectors be installed on every floor of your home, inside and outside every bedroom and along a path outdoors. They also recommend cleaning and testing the alarms each month to ensure they are in proper working condition. Unfortunately, that does not happen in all homes. For many, it is far too easy to remove a smoke detector's battery for another use, or because of a false alarm—and forget to replace it.

That is why, starting in April, stores will only be allowed to sell new, upgraded smoke detectors that have a 10-year, sealed, non-removable battery or that can be hardwired directly to a home. Property owners will be legally required to upgrade all smoke detectors before they can rent a home and homeowners will be required to do the same before they can sell their home. Businesses will also be required to upgrade to the new alarms.

The Association of Fire Chiefs believe these newer detectors to be much safer than the ones currently in most homes. They help eliminate the false alarms and low chirping sounds when a battery is dying.

Through its [Home Fire Campaign](#), the American Red Cross is helping people who do not have the extra income to afford the new smoke detectors, or do not have the ability to install them.

With this new law, and these new smoke detectors, we can help prevent tragedies and save lives. I hope you will consider making the transition to these newer alarms as soon as possible.