How to recycle your old Smoke Detector

There are two types of smoke detectors sold in stores today, photoelectric and ionization. Photoelectric detectors can be safely taken to e-waste drop off sites for recycling. Make sure to remove the battery. Ionization detectors contain a small amount of Americium 241, (AM-241) a radioactive isotope. Ionization-based detectors are perfectly safe when in use, as the radioactive material is shielded by a metal chamber inside the smoke detector. You should never try to take apart an old ionization detector because the radioactive material may become exposed.

The Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) collection center is not permitted to accept radioactive material, including ionization smoke detectors. Old smoke detector can be mailed back to the original manufacturer for First Alert, BRK, or Family Guard brands, or they can be mailed to a recycling center that accepts ionization smoke detectors. Start by locating the brand name and model number of the device. You can find this information in the user's manual. Then you can determine how to safely recycle your smoke alarm.