

Countering the Counterfeits

In many households, the gifts are unwrapped, the fruit cake stored until next year (because there is really only one fruitcake in the world), and the tree ornaments are carefully put away. That's when you finally have time to sit down and look at the cool electronics and gadgets you got. As you study the box it came in, you see some misspelled words and it has funny markings on it. You don't recognize the testing company, like UL.

You hesitate and something tells you to look a little closer at the product before you plug the gadget into the outlet or charger. You get a sense that something doesn't seem right and maybe could even be unsafe. And, as you hold the box, a flash back runs through your mind to what Aunt Martha gave you last year and that whole fire department episode. As you recall, she purchased an off-brand gadget and the end result was a fire. As you stare at the box in your hands now, you are grateful that last year's fire was small and didn't burn down the whole house; and you resolve it won't happen again. That is when you realize what you are actually holding in your hands.

You see, Aunt Martha thought she could save a few dollars and purchased a counterfeit electronic device, most likely unknowingly. They look the same as the other ones and they seem to be the same, but they are not. Instead, these counterfeit devices can be unsafe, dangerous and deadly.

So, next time you purchase a product, especially if the price is too good to be true, consider these actions.

- Only purchase from trusted sources.
- Check electrical manufacturers' websites to find authorized retailers and dealers.
- Only purchase items that have been tested and marked, such as with UL listing.
- Packaging should contain the name and contact information of the manufacturer.
- Avoid unknown brands and products that do not display any brand affiliation.
- Products and packaging with typos and misspellings have a high likelihood of being counterfeit.



One organization has initiated a campaign to address counterfeits and information can be found at their website www.besafebuyreal.ul.org. Underwriters Laboratories' World Anti-Counterfeiting Campaign is an annual global campaign designed to raise awareness among the general public, industries, governments and societies about the health and safety risks associated with the consequences of counterfeiting. Their website has some valuable information that gives you key knowledge for detecting counterfeits and keeping your world safe. See example below.

- *Is your smoke detector "legit?"* Check out the attachment to verify.

So, next time you are shopping, no matter how good the deal may be, do your homework and really know what you are buying. Your family's safety could literally be in your hands.

4 ways to identify fake smoke alarms



Red flags to identify counterfeit smoke alarms

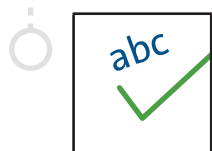
1 Product name or certification label is missing on the box or product itself.



Use of the words “approved” or “pending” instead of “CERTIFIED.”

2

3 Lack of product manuals or no toll-free number to report problems.



Misspellings on the product packaging.

4

Legitimate UL labels for smoke alarms should have



The UL trademark in a circle, with the letter L lower than the U.



“CERTIFIED” written out in capital letters.



The product’s identity and a unique identifier, e.g., Class 3 power supply.



Products that have been certified to meet standards undergo rigorous testing by an independent laboratory.

Without this certification, you may have doubts about whether the product or system meets the safety criteria or has been assessed for how it will perform.

Sources:

<https://www.ul.com/resources/paving-way-regulatory-acceptance-enhanced-and-smart-ul-marks>

<https://portagecountysafetycouncil.files.wordpress.com/2017/09/counterfeiting-cconundrum-electrical-safety-power-point-sept-2017.pdf>

<https://www.consumerreports.org/cro/news/2011/05/atlanta-distributes-then-replaces-counterfeit-smoke-alarms/index.htm>

