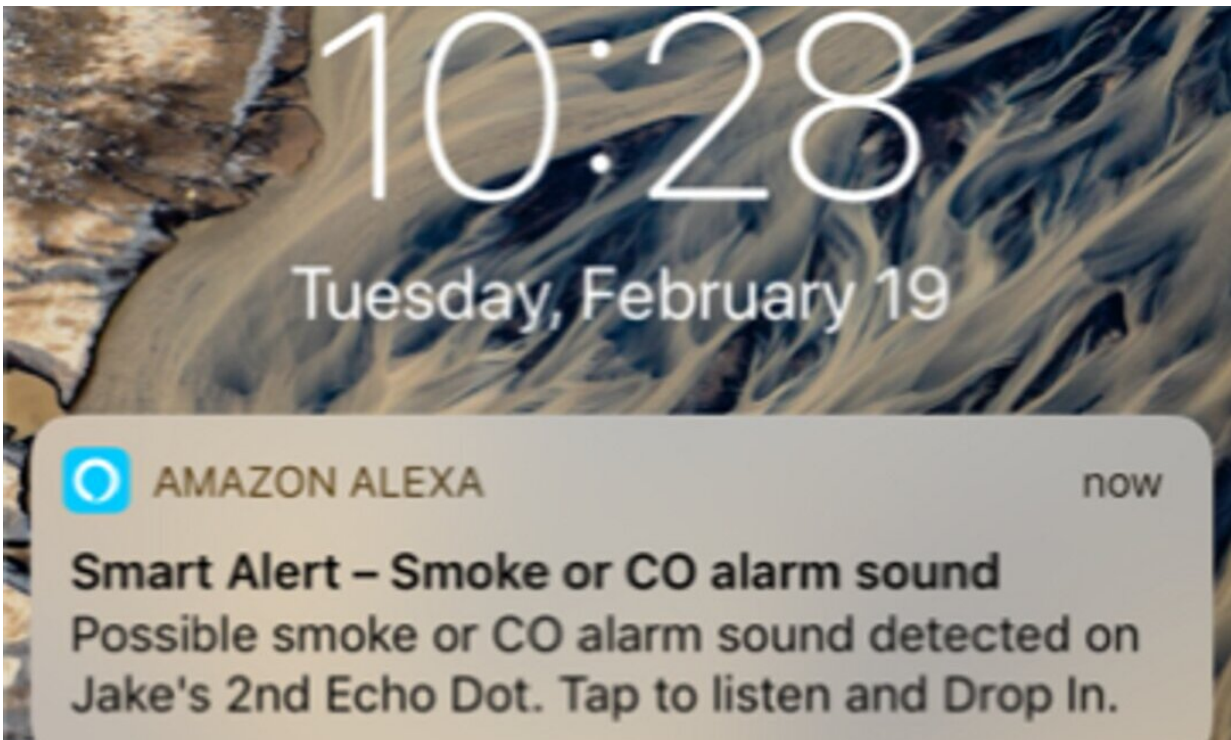


Alexa can now listen for alarms—or, perhaps, a cheating spouse?

May 14 2019, by Jefferson Graham, Usa Today



Alert from Alexa with Amazon's Guard feature. Credit: Amazon

Alexa's got a new gig: home safety.

Amazon today introduces Alexa Guard, a free feature that uses the microphones of the Amazon Echo speakers to listen for the sounds of smoke and carbon monoxide alarms or breaking glass.

Should the [personal assistant](#) hear any of those, it will send text alerts to your phone. Amazon says it's introducing the feature to "help you keep your home safe."

Amazon says that security devices, such as the Ring video doorbell, which Amazon owns, or ADT Pulse, which it doesn't, can work with Guard in that Alexa will send the alerts to the security provider.

Additionally, Alexa can be programmed to have smart, connected lights turn on and off remotely when you're out "to make it look like you're home while you're away," says Amazon.

To sign up, users will need to update their Alexa smartphone apps, go to Settings, and select Guard to begin setup. The command to trigger it is "Alexa, I'm leaving," and that switches Guard into "Away mode." That's when Alexa starts listening for the sounds of alarms. Amazon says Alexa can listen to these while doing other tasks, such as playing music.

However, to take advantage of the services, there's a catch. You'll want to have more than one Echo in the house. Amazon recommends putting one in every room, as close to the alarms as possible.

The entry-level Echo, the Dot, currently starts at \$29.99.

These Smart Alerts also include the ability to "Drop In" on the sounds of your home, via the Echo to listen in remotely.

Privacy alert! Amazon's stated reason is to hear the sounds of the [alarm](#), but for the first time, via this feature, one could now use Alexa remotely to also snoop in on the sounds from home – a cheating spouse or a misbehaving teen, perhaps.

Amazon had no comment on the privacy question. But here's how it

works:

In your alert will be a button that says "Drop In On Echo." According to Amazon, "When you tap that button, it will establish an audio connection between the phone that received the notification, and the Echo that detected the alarm or glass break sound." Thus, you can now listen in real time to the sounds of home.

Amazon does note in announcing the feature that accurately reproducing the sound of glass breaking is tough because of its frequency range and sound energy. "So, to create authentic sound profiles, Amazon hired licensed contractors to break real glass in a testing lab. This team broke hundreds of different windows, in different sizes, including single pane and double pane, with a variety of instruments including crow bars, hammers, bricks, baseball bats and more."

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