

Smoke Alarms

At a minimum, smoke alarms should be placed in each bedroom and hallway outside the sleeping area. In addition, a detector is required on each level of your home. It is recommended that you change your batteries in your smoke alarms when you change your clocks - twice a year. While changing batteries, also vacuum your detector to prevent dust build-up. You should check your alarms with the test button each month to make sure they alarm properly. Smoke alarms need to be replaced every ten years or sooner if they quit working. The materials used in making the detector lose their effectiveness over time causing the detector to eventually fail.

Smoke alarms are the most effective early warning devices available. Because fire can grow and spread so quickly, having working smoke alarms in the home can mean the difference between life and death. But these life-saving devices are only effective when they're working properly. Smoke alarms with batteries that are dead, disconnected, or missing can't alert people to the dangers of smoke and fire.

The Right Way to Install Alarms

- Smoke alarms need to be installed on every level of the home, including the basement, in each sleeping area and outside each sleeping area.
- New homes are required to have a smoke alarm in every sleeping room and all alarms must be interconnected.
- If people sleep with bedroom doors closed, recommend that a qualified electrician install interconnected smoke alarms in each room so that when one alarm sounds, they all sound.
- Hard-wired smoke alarms operate on household electrical current. They can be interconnected so that every alarm sounds regardless of the fire's location. This gives occupants extra time to escape if they are in one part of the home and a fire breaks out in another part.
- Smoke alarms should be mounted high on walls or ceilings (remind people that smoke rises).
- Smoke alarms should never be painted.

Check Smoke Alarms Regularly

- Smoke alarms need to be tested once a month, following the manufacturer's instructions.
- Batteries in smoke alarms should be replaced once a year, or as soon as the alarm "chirps" warning that the battery is low.
- Never "borrow" a battery from a smoke alarm.
- Don't disable smoke alarms even temporarily. If the smoke alarm is sounding "nuisance alarms," suggest that people try relocating it farther from kitchens or

bathrooms, or replace the alarm with one that has a pause, silencer or hush button.

- Regularly vacuuming or dusting smoke alarms, following the manufacturer's instructions, can keep them working properly.
- Smoke alarms need to be replaced once every 10 years.

Safety Tips and Knowing How to Respond When the Alarm Sounds

Although smoke alarms are essential protection from a fire, they aren't enough. A smoke alarm sounds the warning but families also need a well-developed home escape plan.

- Households should develop a home fire escape plan that everyone is familiar with.
- Make sure everyone can clearly hear and recognize the sound of all smoke alarms at all times, and knows exactly what to do when it sounds. Some studies have shown that some children may not awaken to the sound of the smoke alarm. Communicate with parents that they should know what their child will do before a fire occurs.
- Escape plans should be practiced at least twice a year.
- Remind people to be fully prepared for a real fire: when a smoke alarm sounds, they need to get out immediately.
- Install smoke alarms inside every bedroom, outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home, including the basement.
- Larger homes may need additional smoke alarms to provide enough protection.
- For the best protection, interconnect all smoke alarms so when one sounds they all sound.
- An Ionization smoke alarm is generally more responsive to flaming fires and a Photoelectric smoke alarm is generally more responsive to smoldering fires. For the best protection, both types of alarms or combination ionization and photoelectric alarms (also known as dual sensor alarms) are recommended.
- Smoke alarms should be installed away from the kitchen to prevent false alarms. Generally, they should be at least 10 feet (3 meters) from a cooking appliance.