

SMOKE



ALARMS:

WAKE UP AND LIVE

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## WILL YOUR SMOKE ALARMS BE READY WHEN YOU NEED THEM MOST?

It creeps into your room silently. It lulls you into a deep sleep. And it can kill you in less than a minute.

Smoke is every bit as deadly as fire. In fact, smoke inhalation causes 75 percent of fire-related deaths.

Half of fatal fires occur between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m., while people are asleep. People think they will wake up if they smell smoke. But smoke numbs the senses, pulling its victims into a deeper sleep—one from which they most likely will never awake. It causes fatigue, weakness, confusion, dizziness, and ultimately, death.

Once smoke turns to fire, a small flame can become an uncontrollable blaze in less than 30 seconds. Smoke alarms are your first line of defense. A properly maintained smoke alarm, combined with a well-rehearsed escape plan, will help you and the people you love get out before it's too late.



## FIRE FACTS:

- This country has one of the highest rates of fire-related deaths in the industrialized world.
- In comparison, the number of casualties from all other natural disasters combined—including floods, hurricanes, tornadoes and earthquakes—is a fraction of those resulting from fire.
- Residential fires are responsible for roughly 80 percent of fire-related deaths.
- There was a home-fire death in this country once every 170 minutes.
- Children under age five have twice as great a risk (above the national average) of dying in a residential fire. People over 65 also have twice as great a risk, while people over 85 are at four times greater risk than average.



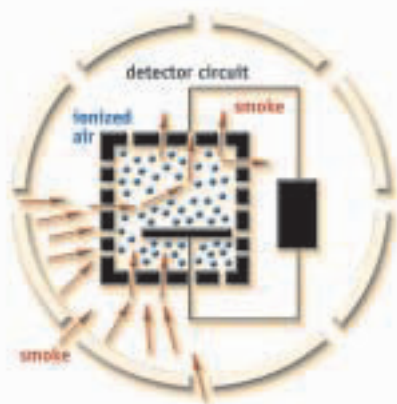
## SMOKE ALARM FACTS:

- Working smoke alarms reduce your chance of dying in a fire by half.
- Approximately 70 percent of residential fire deaths take place in homes that do not have smoke alarms, or have smoke alarms that are not working properly.
- Residences with smoke alarms that are not working outnumber those with no smoke alarm.
- Missing or dead batteries are the main cause of smoke alarms failing to sound.

# SMOKE ALARMS COME IN 2 BASIC TYPES

## Ionization Alarms

Ionization alarms contain electrically charged particles called ions. Smoke changes the electrical balance of the air. When the balance shifts to a certain degree, the alarm is triggered.



Ionization alarms respond most quickly to heat and flame, so they are better at detecting fast spreading fires. These types of fires might start in a wastepaper basket, from a candle, or from a grease fire in the kitchen.

## Photoelectric Alarms

Inside every photoelectric alarm is a beam of light and a light sensor. Under normal circumstances, the beam is directed away from the light sensor. When smoke is present, it redirects the beam so that it hits the light sensor, activating the alarm.



Photoelectric alarms are best at detecting smoldering fires, which may smoke for hours before igniting. These types of fires might source from a cigarette ash smoldering in bedding or upholstery, or a fireplace fire that wasn't fully extinguished.

## Which should I choose?

Both types of alarms provide crucial early warning in case of a fire. Many people install some of each type. If you are unsure which will be best for your home, some alarms are equipped with both ionization and photoelectric detection systems in one unit.

Both types of alarms are widely available at hardware and general merchandise stores. Make sure to choose an alarm that has been approved by a recognized testing organization, such as Underwriters Laboratories (U.L.).

Smoke alarms cost about \$10 to \$25 and are easy to install. Often, someone from your local fire department will help you to install smoke alarms.

### Battery-powered vs. Hard-wired

Most smoke alarms are powered by batteries. Some people choose to have hardwired smoke alarms, which are connected directly to a home's electrical system. Although hardwired systems are convenient, a home might lose power in the early stages of a fire. For this reason, hardwired alarms should have battery backup. Hardwired alarms should be installed by a qualified electrician.



# SMOKE ALARM PLACEMENT AND INSTALLATION

After deciding which type of alarm to use, you'll need to determine the best placement for alarms.

You should have a minimum of one smoke alarm on each level of your home, including the basement. Make sure to have one alarm within 15 feet of sleeping areas. Do a test to make sure all members of your family can hear the alarm from inside their bedrooms with the doors closed. Make sure everyone, especially small children, wakes up to the sound of your smoke alarm, even from a deep sleep.

Many new homes are required to have an alarm inside each bedroom. These alarms are often interconnected, so that if one goes off, they all sound.

## Placement Do's:

- Do place alarms on ceilings, four to 12 inches from the closest wall.
- If it is more convenient to place an alarm on the wall, make sure it is four to 12 inches from the ceiling.
- Do place alarms at least three feet from doors, windows, air ducts, ceiling fans, and air conditioning units, which may keep smoke away from the alarm.
- If you have a vaulted ceiling, place an alarm at the highest point for extra safety, because smoke rises.





## Placement Don'ts:

- Don't place alarms between a door or window and an air vent, where air patterns may interfere with smoke reaching the alarm.
- Don't place alarms in corners. Corners are dead air space and will prevent smoke from reaching the alarm.
- Don't place alarms on outside walls that become cold or hot due to weather changes. This can interfere with their proper operation.
- Don't place alarms in kitchens, bathrooms, laundry rooms, or garages. Cooking fumes, steam, humidity, and exhaust fumes can cause nuisance alarms and damage alarms' detection mechanisms.
- Don't place alarms where they will be too difficult to maintain (testing, changing batteries, and cleaning).



## Do Not Install In:



**Kitchen**



**Bathroom**



**Garage**



**Laundry Room**

## PLANNING GRID

Use this grid to help you sketch a diagram of each floor of your house. Mark all main exits, and two routes out of each room. Look over the plan with your family to make sure they're aware of all possible ways out of the house.

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ur home. Mark locations of smoke alarms,  
e plan with every member of your family,  
use.



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# MAINTAINING YOUR SMOKE ALARMS

## Battery Basics

Experts say that roughly one-third of smoke alarms are inoperable. The chief cause is batteries that aren't working, or have been removed.

Replace smoke alarm batteries twice a year or when you hear the low-battery "chirp." Daylight savings time is an easy-to-remember time to change your batteries. If you've just moved into a new home, put fresh batteries in the alarms and test them to make sure they're working properly.

Experts recommend not using rechargeable batteries in smoke alarms. They may not provide a consistent charge.

**Change alarm batteries twice a year and test alarms once a month.**

Never remove a battery from a smoke alarm for any reason. More often than not, people forget to put them back, and that can be a deadly mistake. Don't "borrow" smoke alarm batteries for another use. If you experience a "nuisance" alarm, fan smoke away from the alarm and open nearby windows, rather than taking the battery out. Or use the alarm's "hush" button, if your alarm comes equipped with that feature.



## **Test Your Alarms**

Test your smoke alarms once a month by pressing each alarm's "test" button. Use a broom handle to press the button if you can't easily reach.

If the alarm does not sound, replace the battery and test again. If the alarm still does not sound, replace the unit.

Make sure everyone recognizes the smoke alarm sound, and can hear it through a closed door from his or her bedroom.

## **Care and Cleaning**

At least twice a year, use a vacuum cleaner attachment to remove dust and cobwebs from smoke alarms.

Never paint or decorate smoke alarms, as this can interfere with an alarm's proper functioning. When painting near an alarm, make a paper shield to protect it and remove when finished.

## **Replacement**

Experts recommend that you replace smoke alarms every seven to 10 years. Even if they appear to be in working order, tests have shown higher incidences of random failure after alarms reach 10 years of age. Remember that testing alarms every month is the best way to ensure that they are working properly.

Use a permanent marker to write the installation date on the inside cover of your smoke alarms. That way you'll know when it's time to replace them.

# SPRINKLER SYSTEMS

Home sprinkler systems are both practical and affordable, and they provide significant extra fire protection for you and your family.

## Basic sprinkler facts:

- Chances are small of a sprinkler going off accidentally due to a defect—one in every 16 million sprinklers per year.
- Each sprinkler is designed to react individually to temperatures in a room. If one sprinkler is set off, they don't all become activated.
- Sprinklers come in colors to match ceilings and can be recessed so that they are inconspicuous.
- To prevent leaks, sprinkler systems are tested at higher pressures than the rest of a home's plumbing system.
- Sprinklers cause less water damage than fire department hoses used to control the same size fire.
- Installing a sprinkler system costs about as much as installing new carpeting throughout the home. Lower insurance rates provide significant additional savings.
- In a number of communities across the country that have sprinkler ordinances in place, sprinklers have eliminated residential fire fatalities.



**Get Residential Sprinklers!**

## FIRE SAFETY TIPS

Smoke alarms are your first line of defense once fire breaks out. But preventing fires before they start is the best way to keep you and your family safe.

- Never overload outlets or extension cords.
- Never run cords underneath rugs or in places where they might become pinched or stretched tightly.
- If fuses blow, lights flicker, or sparks fly from outlets or appliances, have a licensed electrician inspect your home's wiring.
- Unplug appliances when not in use.
- Never leave cooking unattended.
- Keep all fabrics (oven mitts, curtains, dish towels) at least three feet from the stove.
- Children set close to 20,000 house fires each year. Teach children to never play with matches or lighters, and keep these items well out of children's reach.
- If you have a fireplace, use fire screens.
- Keep candles well away from anything that might catch fire. Never leave candles unattended, and use fireproof candleholders that won't tip over.
- If you smoke in your house, never smoke in bed.
- Have furnaces and chimneys inspected annually.



## EVACUATION PLANS

Having smoke alarms that work properly is the first crucial step in any fire safety plan. But what should you do if the alarm goes off?



House fires can double in size every 30 seconds. Experts say you have less than five minutes to evacuate in the case of fire. Are you prepared?

### Basic evacuation tips:

- Have a fire evacuation plan and practice it regularly until everyone can get out in three to five minutes.
- Make sure everyone in your family knows two ways out of every room in the house. For second-story rooms, you may need to purchase a U.L.-approved fire escape ladder.
- In the event of fire, feel doors with the back of your hand. If a door feels hot, use your alternate exit.
- Crawl on hands and knees to avoid smoke.
- Never go back inside a burning building.
- Have a designated meeting place a safe distance from your house. Everyone should go directly there after evacuating.
- If someone is missing, inform the fire department. They are trained to perform rescues.

# SMOKE ALARMS

## Quick Review Checklist:

- ☐ Decide which type of alarm will be most effective in each area of your home.
- ☐ Make sure to choose alarms that have been approved by a recognized testing organization, such as Underwriters Laboratories (U.L.).
- ☐ Have at least one smoke alarm on each floor of your home, including the basement.
- ☐ Test your alarms every month.
- ☐ Replace batteries twice a year or when you hear the low-battery “chirp.”
- ☐ Never remove smoke alarm batteries for any reason.
- ☐ Practice your evacuation plan, and make sure that everyone in your home wakes to the sound of your smoke alarm.
- ☐ Clean smoke alarms at least twice a year.
- ☐ Replace your smoke alarms every seven to 10 years.

**Test and take care of your smoke alarms—your life depends on them.**







Smoke alarms reduce your chance of dying in a fire by 50 percent—if they're properly maintained.

Make sure your smoke alarms are ready to protect you and your family:

- Change smoke alarm batteries twice a year.
- Test smoke alarms every month.

**Take care of your smoke alarms so they'll be ready to take care of you.**



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