

Home Smoke Alarms

Most fatal home fires happen at night when people are sleeping. In reality, the smell of smoke may not wake a sleeping person. A fire produces poisonous gases and smoke, which may numb the senses and put you into a deeper sleep. Inexpensive household smoke alarms can save your life by sounding an alarm alerting you to a fire, and giving you time to escape safely. Home fire deaths have steadily decreased as the numbers of homes with working smoke alarms has increased. Having working smoke alarms in your home reduces your risk of dying in a fire by half.

Choosing a Smoke Alarm

When purchasing a smoke alarm, check to make sure that it has been tested to the CAN/ULC S531-M standard by an approved testing agency. There are two types of smoke alarms.

One type is called an ionization alarm because it monitors "ions", electrically charged particles. Smoke particles entering the sensing chamber change the electrical balance of the air. The alarm sounds when the change in electrical balance reaches a pre-set level.

The other type is called a photoelectric alarm because its sensing chamber uses a beam of light and a light sensor. Smoke particles entering the chamber change the amount of light that reaches the light sensor. The alarm sounds when the smoke density reaches a pre-set level. Both types of smoke alarms are acceptable and perform effectively, provided they are installed and maintained correctly

How many Smoke Alarms do I need?

It is required that every home have at least one smoke alarm outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home, including the basement. For maximum protection, consider installing a smoke alarm in every bedroom. Ensure everyone sleeping in your home can hear the sound of the smoke alarm when the bedroom doors are closed. If anyone is hearing impaired, install special smoke alarms that will alert him or her. Provincial Building Regulations govern the installation of smoke alarms.

Where do I install my Smoke Alarms?

Since smoke rises, install smoke alarms high on a wall or on the ceiling. Take the time to read the manufacturer's instructions carefully and follow them exactly. Do not install an alarm near a window, door or air register where drafts could prevent smoke from reaching the alarm.

How do I maintain my Smoke Alarm?

It is very important to test and clean all smoke alarms regularly.

- Test your smoke alarms by pressing the test button once a month.

- Vacuum your smoke alarms twice a year to remove any dirt or dust from the sensing chamber.
- For battery operated smoke alarms, change the battery twice a year. It is suggested to change batteries when you change to clocks, spring and fall. Remember, never "borrow" the smoke alarm's battery for another use.
- Smoke alarms do not last forever. Smoke alarms that are older than 10 years should be replaced.

What do I do if my Smoke Alarm sounds?

Smoke alarms give your family a warning, but it is your responsibility to get yourself and your family out of your home safely. Your family will do the right thing if you've planned ahead for a fire emergency.

- Ensure everyone knows what the smoke alarm sounds like.
- Plan your escape routes. Know at least two ways out of every bedroom and choose a meeting place outside where your family can gather.
- When a smoke alarm sounds, leave right away. Go directly to your family meeting place and call 9-1-1 or your local emergency number from a neighbour's phone.
- Remember, once you're out... stay out. Never go back inside a burning building.
- Practice your home escape plan at least twice a year.