



JACKSON BUREAU OF FIRE SAFETY FIRE DISTRICT No. 1 & 3

FIRE SAFETY INFORMATIONAL BULLETIN

2004-009



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**EMERGENCY
DIAL
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SMOKE ALARMS IN THE HOME

Smoke alarms are the residential fire safety success story of the past quarter century. Smoke alarm technology has been around since the 1960s. But the single-station, battery-powered smoke alarm we know today became available to consumers in the 1970s, and since then, the home fire death rate has been reduced by half. NFPA estimates that 94% of U.S. homes have at least one smoke alarm today, and most states have laws requiring them in residential dwellings.

Important: Working smoke alarms are essential in every household. It is necessary to practice home fire drills to be certain everyone is familiar with the smoke alarm signal, and to determine if there are any obstacles to a quick and safe evacuation (including the inability for some to awaken from the smoke alarm)

Facts & Figures

- 19 of every 20 homes (95%) in the U.S. have at least one smoke alarm.
- More than half of home fire deaths result from fires in the 5% of homes with no smoke alarms.
- Homes with smoke alarms typically have a death rate 40-50% less than homes without alarms.
- In one-quarter of the reported fires in homes equipped with smoke alarms, the devices did not work. Households with non-working smoke alarms now outnumber those with no smoke alarms.
- Why do smoke alarms fail? Most often because of missing, dead or disconnected batteries.

Installation Tips

- Install at least one smoke alarm on every floor of your home (including the basement) and outside each sleeping area. If you sleep with the door closed, NFPA recommends installing smoke alarms inside the room. In new homes, smoke alarms are required in all sleeping rooms (NFPA 72).
- Mount the smoke alarms on ceilings or high on walls – remember, smoke rises. Ceiling-mounted alarms should be installed at least four inches away from the nearest wall; wall-mounted alarms should be installed at least four inches, but not more than 12 inches away from the ceiling. On vaulted ceilings, be sure to mount the alarm at the highest point of the ceiling.
- Don't install near windows, outside doors, or ducts where drafts might interfere with their operation.
- Don't paint your smoke alarms; paint or other decorations could keep them from working when you most need it.



MAINTENANCE TIPS

Test smoke alarms at least once a month by using the alarm's "test button" .Never "borrow" a battery from a smoke alarm.

Replace the batteries twice a year, or as soon as the alarm "chirps," warning that the battery is low. **Hint:** schedule battery replacements the same day you change your clock from daylight to standard time.

Regularly vacuuming or dusting your smoke alarm following manufacturer's instructions can help keep it working properly. Replace your smoke alarms once every 10 years.

Make sure that everyone in your home can hear and recognize the sound of the alarm and knows how to react immediately. NFPA recommends that people who have hearing impairments install smoke alarms with strobe lights to alert them to a fire.

Alarms that are hard-wired to the home's electrical system should be installed by a qualified electrician.