

Installing and Maintaining Your Smoke Alarms



Most deaths due to house fires happen at night, while people are sleeping. Victims may never wake up because of the poisonous effects of gas and smoke created by the blaze. Smoke alarms will protect you from these silent killers if they are properly installed and maintained.

Where should you put your smoke alarms?

- Alarms should be placed outside every sleeping area and on every level of the home. Don't forget to install a smoke alarm at the bottom of the basement stairs.
- If you sleep with the bedroom door closed, install a smoke alarm inside the bedroom.

Features you can expect to find on new model smoke alarms:

- a "missing battery" indicator
- an optional alarm hush or silence feature
- the use of a power "on" indicator light to show that AC power is being supplied to 120 volt wired in smoke alarms.

Can you hear your smoke alarm at night?

It is a good idea to test your smoke alarms while the family is sleeping. One test will verify if they will hear the alarm, and escape from a fire in time.

Choosing a smoke alarm

Smoke alarms either run on batteries, or are wired directly into your home's electrical system. You can easily install battery-powered smoke alarms following the manufacturer's instructions. A qualified electrician should install units that use your home's electrical system. These alarms must be used with a battery as backup in case of power outages. No matter which model you select, carefully follow the manufacturer's instructions on testing and maintenance.

Different smoke alarms for different types of fire!

Ionization

- Fastest type to respond to flaming fires
- Lowest cost and most commonly sold

- Some models have a hush or temporary silence feature that allows silencing without removing the battery
- Some models are available with a long life battery

Photoelectric

- Fastest type to respond to slow smoldering fires and white or gray smoke
- Less prone to nuisance alarms from cooking.

Notwithstanding these differences, to achieve the Underwriters Laboratory of Canada (ULC) listing, both alarms must be tested to the same standard and meet the same requirements. Photoelectric smoke alarms may respond slightly faster to smoldering fires, while ionization alarms respond slightly faster to flaming fires. Since you can't predict the type of fire that may occur, it is difficult to recommend which is best. Both alarms will detect all types of fires that commonly occur in the home. Installing both types of smoke alarms in your home can enhance fire safety.

Check your smoke alarm regularly!

Test your smoke alarms every month. Do this by pressing and holding the test button for a few seconds. The alarm should sound immediately. Replace models that do not have test buttons or that are more than 10 years old.

Change the battery in your smoke alarm at least once a year, more often if necessary.

A good reminder is: change your clock, change your battery!

Beeping smoke alarms may need cleaning. Clean your smoke alarms twice a year by removing the cover and carefully wiping it with a damp cloth. Gently vacuum the sensor unit inside. Replace the cover and test the smoke alarm to make sure it is working properly. If it doesn't stop beeping, replace the unit or the battery.

Plan and practise an escape route in case of fire!

The shrill whine of a smoke alarm can be frightening, especially in the middle of the night. To avoid the panic and confusion caused by fear—plan and practise a fire escape route with your family. Choose two exits from every room. Once you escape, stay out of the building! Choose a safe place to gather in case of fire. Call the fire department from a neighbour's house.