

## **Smoke Detector Program**

The Fire Department offers a limited free smoke detector program to bring single family residences into compliance with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) recommendations. Free smoke detectors are available, while supplies last, to homeowners who may not be able to afford/install detectors on their own. Interested homeowners may contact the Fire Department 314-993-0408 during normal business hours.

## **Smoke Alarm Installation Tips**

Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, including the basement, making sure that there is an alarm outside every separate sleeping area. Hard-wired smoke alarms operate on your household electrical current. They can be interconnected so that every alarm sounds regardless of the fire's location. This is an advantage in early warning, because it gives occupants extra time to escape if they are in one part of the home and a fire breaks out in another part. Alarms that are hard-wired should have battery backups in case of a power outage, and should be installed by a qualified electrician. When interconnected smoke alarms are installed, it is important that all of the alarms are from the same manufacturer. If the alarms are not compatible, they may not sound. On levels without bedrooms, install alarms in the living room (or den or family room) or near the stairway to the upper level, or in both locations. Smoke alarms installed in the basement should be installed on the ceiling at the bottom of the stairs leading to the next level. Smoke alarms should be installed at least 10 feet (3 meters) from a cooking appliance to minimize false alarms when cooking.

If you sleep with bedroom doors closed, have a qualified electrician install interconnected smoke alarms in each room so that when one alarm sounds, they all sound. If you or someone in your home is deaf or hard of hearing, consider installing an alarm that combines flashing lights, vibration and/or sound.

Mount smoke alarms high on walls or ceilings (remember, smoke rises). Ceiling mounted alarms should be installed at least four inches away from the nearest wall; wall-mounted alarms should be installed four to 12 inches away from the ceiling. If you have ceilings that are pitched, install the alarm within 3 feet of the peak but not within the apex of the peak (four inches down from the peak).

Don't install smoke alarms near windows, doors, or ducts where drafts might interfere with their operation. Choose smoke alarms that have the label of a recognized testing laboratory. Never paint smoke alarms. Paint, stickers, or other decorations could keep the alarms from working.

There are two types of smoke alarms – ionization and photoelectric. 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-photoelectric alarms, also known as dual sensor smoke alarms, are recommended.

Keep manufacturer's instructions for reference.

## **Replacing your smoke alarms**

Replace all smoke alarms when they are 10 years old. To determine the age of your smoke alarm, look at the back where you will find the date of manufacture. Smoke alarms should be replaced 10 years from the date of manufacture. Immediately replace any smoke alarm that does not respond properly when tested. Replace combination smoke-carbon monoxide alarms according to the manufacturer's recommendations.

**Installing your smoke alarms correctly - and making sure they are in working order - is an important step to making your home and family safer from fire.**

It's important to have enough smoke alarms in your home. Fire research has demonstrated that with today's modern furnishings, fires can spread much more rapidly than in the past when more natural materials were used. Because of this, having a sufficient number of properly located smoke alarms is essential to maximize the amount of available escape time. For many years *National Fire Alarm and Signaling Code*, has required as a minimum that smoke alarms be installed inside every sleep room (even for existing homes) in addition to requiring them outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home. (Additional smoke alarms are required for larger homes.) Homes built to earlier standards often don't meet these minimum requirements. Homeowners and enforcement authorities should recognize that detection needs have changed over the years and take proactive steps make sure that every home has a sufficient complement of smoke alarms.

**Testing smoke alarms**

Smoke alarms should be maintained according to manufacturer's instructions. Test smoke alarms at least once a month using the test button. Make sure everyone in the home understands the sound of the smoke alarm and knows how to respond. Follow manufacturer's instructions for cleaning to keep smoke alarms working well. The instructions are included in the package or can be found on the internet. Smoke alarms with non-replaceable 10-year batteries are designed to remain effective for up to 10 years. If the alarm chirps, warning that the battery is low, replace the entire smoke alarm right away. Smoke alarms with any other type of battery need a new battery at least once a year. If that alarm chirps, warning the battery is low, replace the battery right away. When replacing a battery, follow manufacturer's list of batteries on the back of the alarm or manufacturer's instructions. Manufacturer's instructions are specific to the batteries (brand and model) that must be used. The smoke alarm may not work properly if a different kind of battery is used.