



Home Smoke Alarms

Smoke alarms save lives: The majority of home fires that kill people happen at night. Inexpensive home smoke alarms can make you in time to escape - cutting your chances of dying nearly in half. Smoke alarms do save lives and are required by law in all private homes on every floor and the current code requires smoke detectors in all sleeping areas of your home.

How to choose a smoke alarm - You can buy smoke detectors from any retail store such as Target, KMart, Wal-Mart, Home Depot, Lower and Menards. You do not necessarily have to buy the most expensive smoke detectors. Tests have been conducted and the cheapest one responds just as well as the most expensive detectors. Some home alarms run on batteries and others on home current. There are also different sensors for smoke detectors. Some smoke detectors react faster to smoldering fires, while others react faster to flaming fires. All are fast enough to provide sufficient warning. All smoke alarms, regardless of the type, will protect you as long as they are installed and maintained properly.

Where to install a smoke detector - Smoke rises, so mount the alarms on the ceiling or high on the wall. If mounted on the wall, the smoke alarm shall be positioned with the top of the alarm 4 - 12 inches from the ceiling. A ceiling mounted smoke alarm should be at least 4 inches away from the nearest wall. If you have a vaulted ceiling, the alarm should be at or near the ceiling's highest point. In stairways, locate them at the top or bottom. In closed stairways, such as those leading from a basement, always place the smoke alarm at the bottom of the stairs. Don't install a smoke detector near a window, door or air-register where drafts could interfere with it's operation.

Most battery-powered smoke alarms and alarms that plug into an outlet can be installed by using a drill and screwdriver and by following the manufacturer's instructions. You can also hard-wire alarms into your home. Have a qualified electrician do the job.

Maintenance

Never "borrow" a smoke-alarm battery. This could be a matter of life or death if you remove a battery. Test all your smoke detectors monthly by pushing the "test button" and install new batteries at least once a year when you set the clocks back in the fall. If your alarm is "chirping" that is an indication that the battery is low, or buy an alarm with a 10-year battery. Clean your smoke alarms by using a vacuum cleaner or air pressure without removing the alarm's cover.

False Alarms

Cooking vapors, steam and other fumes sometimes can set off a smoke alarm. If this happens, don't take the battery out of your alarm. A way to tell that a smoke alarm is in "armed mode" is by seeing a solid red light on the alarm device. Try moving it away from the source of the problem. Clean your detectors regularly. If your detector does go off you can use something such as a piece of cardboard, book, or towel to wave at the smoke alarm to clear. If this does not work, it may take a while for the smoke alarm to clear. If it does not clear you may need to replace the smoke alarm.

Need assistance with smoke alarms? Contact West Metro Fire-Rescue District Fire Prevention Stall at 763-537-2323 extension 2003, 2004. We can assist with any smoke detector problems that may arise in your home.