

Is There Any Place I Shouldn't put a Smoke Alarm?

Smoke alarms are not made to work in extreme heat or cold. They are not recommended for attics and similar spaces that are heated in the winter or cooled in the summer. This also applies to garages. The smoke from the engine exhaust fumes will cause nuisance alarms and clog the smoke alarm. Also, don't mount smoke alarms near fans, air ducts, windows, doors, or fireplaces. The moving air can blow smoke away from the sensor.

Are They Difficult to Install?

Not at all. In most cases, all you'll need is a screwdriver. Some brands are self-adhesive and will automatically stick to the wall or ceiling where they are placed. However, be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions because each brand is different. Most manufacturers provide drawings with instructions that show you where to locate the smoke alarm and how to mount them.

- The best place to mount your smoke alarm is on the ceiling, but make sure it is at least 4-6 inches away from the nearest wall.
- Always test your newly installed smoke alarms.
- If mounting the smoke alarm on the ceiling is not possible, mount the alarm high on the wall, at least three feet from a corner. When mounting on a wall, the smoke alarm should be no closer to the ceiling than 4 inches and no farther from the ceiling than 12 inches.

How Many Do I Need?

The more smoke alarms you have, the better your chances of surviving a fire. The closer the smoke alarm is to a fire, the more quickly it will go off warning you and your family that there is a fire in the house. When deciding how many smoke alarms to put in your home, don't skimp.

Check your smoke alarms at least once a month!

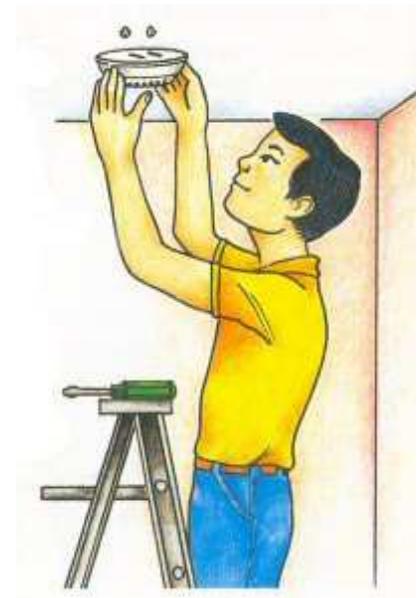


Change your batteries when you change your clocks in the spring and in the winter!



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Smoke Alarms



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San Bernardino County
Fire Department

Community Safety Division



Smoke Alarms

Smoke alarm technology has been around since the 1960s. But the single-station, battery-power 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.

Why Do I Need A Smoke Alarm?

Fire is the third leading cause of accidental death in the home. The risk of dying in a fire is twice as high in a home without a smoke alarm. Most people who die in fires are not in the room where the fire starts. This is because the smoke created by the fire spreads to all areas of the home. Even a small fire can fill your home up with deadly smoke. Three-fourths of all fire-related deaths are from smoke inhalation, caused by toxic gases produced as a fire develops and spreads. Most of fire fatalities occur between 2 a.m. and 6 a.m. when people are sleeping. Contrary to popular belief, the smell of smoke may not wake a sleeping person. Instead, the poisonous gases and smoke produced by a fire can numb the senses and put one into a deeper sleep. The only thing standing between the deadly fumes of a fire and a safe escape is the piercing sound of a smoke alarm.



Where Do I Buy A Smoke Alarm?

Most hardware, home supply, or general merchandise stores carry smoke alarms. If you are unsure of where to buy smoke alarms in your area, call your local fire department on a non-emergency line. If you can not afford a smoke alarm call your local Fire Department on a non-emergency line. Some fire departments have programs that give free smoke alarms to those who need them.



What Type Should I Get?

The type of smoke alarm is less important than the number of smoke alarms you have in your home. There are two basic kinds of smoke alarms: ionization and photoelectric. Both are effective at detecting fires, although they do it in different ways. An ionization alarm monitors "ions" or electrically-charged particles in the air. The ionization alarm responds faster to small smoke particles. Flaming fires produce more small particles. Because the ionization alarm is more sensitive to small smoke particles, it will respond more quickly to the fumes and gases produced from cooking which could cause nuisance alarms if a smoke alarm of this type is installed near the kitchen. A photoelectric alarm uses a beam of light and a sensor. It responds more quickly to larger smoke particles. Smoldering fires produce larger smoke particles.

For placement of smoke alarms, National codes & regulations recommend the following:



- At least one smoke alarm should be installed on every level of the home, including the basements; mount basement alarms on the ceiling above the base of the stairwell. This will allow smoke to be detected at the bottom of the stairs before it blocks the use of the stairs for escape from the basement, or before the fire spreads up the stairs to the floor above.
- There should be a smoke alarm in the main hallway outside of each bedroom area, close enough to be heard through a closed bedroom door.
- Install a smoke alarm inside each bedroom
- On floors without bedrooms, smoke alarms should be in or near living area such as family rooms, living rooms & dens. This is especially important if someone in your home smokes. Fires caused by smoking materials like cigarettes are the leading cause of fire-related deaths; accounting for 23% of all fatalities.
- A smoke alarm should be installed above stairwells.
- Put a smoke alarm near your kitchen. Cooking-related incidents are the leading cause of residential fires and fire-related injuries. Consider using a smoke alarm with a "hush" feature for a smoke alarm located near kitchen.