



Smoke Alarms

A Factsheet on Home Smoke Alarms

Roughly 70 percent of home fire deaths result from fires in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms. Smoke alarms are the great safety success story of the 20th century — but only when they're working properly.

Who Should Have Smoke Alarms?

Every home should have at least one smoke alarm. In the event of a fire, a smoke alarm can save lives.

A properly installed and maintained smoke alarm will provide an early warning signal to your household providing the chance to escape.

Where Do I Install My Smoke Alarms?

Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, including the basement. Many fatal fires begin late at night or in the early morning. For extra safety, install smoke alarms both inside and outside any sleeping areas.

Smoke alarms are not hard to install. In most cases, all you will need is a screwdriver. Follow the manufacturer's installation instructions. Since smoke and many deadly gases rise, install your smoke alarms 6 to 8 inches from the ceiling or side walls.

How Do I Keep Them Working?

There are two simple steps to remember when caring for your smoke alarms.

1. Replace the battery at least once a year in models that use

9 volt batteries. The Seattle Fire Department recommends you change the battery in your smoke alarm when you change you clocks each fall.

2. Keep them clean. Dust and debris can interfere with how smoke alarms work. Regularly vacuum over your smoke alarm to keep it working right.

What's Chirping?

The "chirping" noise lets you know that the battery in your smoke alarm needs to be replaced.

What If the Alarm Goes Off While I Am Cooking?

Then it is doing its job. Do not disable your smoke alarm if it activates due to cooking or other non-fire causes. You may not remember to put the batteries back in the alarm after cooking. Instead, clear the air by waving a towel near the alarm, leaving the batteries in place. If this happens frequently, you may want to move the smoke alarm to a new location.

When Do I Need to Replace My Smoke Alarms?

Smoke alarms should function properly for ten years. Like most

electrical appliances, smoke alarms wear out. After ten years your smoke alarm will have been working for over 87,000 continuous hours. You may want to write the purchase date with a marker on the back of your smoke alarm. That way you will know when it should be replaced.

What If I Can't Afford Smoke Alarms?

The Seattle Fire Department can provide and install smoke alarms for owner-occupied homes in the City of Seattle, when the homeowner is a senior citizen, disabled or living on a low income.

What If I Rent?

Landlords are required by law to provide working smoke alarms at the time a tenant moves into a residence. Tenants are required to maintain the alarm in working order.

For More Information

Contact:

Seattle Fire Department
fireinfo@seattle.gov
www.seattle.gov/fire