

Smoke Alarms

If you have a fire, smoke alarms can cut nearly in half your risk of dying in a fire. Smoke alarms sense abnormal amounts of smoke or invisible combustion gases in the air. They can detect both smoldering and flaming fires. National Fire Protection Association 72, the National Fire Alarm Code, now requires in new homes hard-wired, interconnected smoke alarms with battery back-up on every level of the home, outside each sleeping area, and inside each bedroom. It also requires that alarms be wired together so that if one sounds, they all sound.

- **If smoke alarms are not already in place, at a minimum install them on every level of the home and outside each sleeping area.** If a fire occurs inside a bedroom, dangerous gases can cause heavier sleep. For the best protection, install interconnected smoke alarms in each bedroom and throughout the home. When one sounds, they all sound.
- **To prevent nuisance alarms, vacuum cobwebs and dust from your smoke alarms monthly. Never** disable a smoke alarm, even if you experience nuisance alarms while cooking or showering. Clean the smoke alarm following the manufacturer's instructions and, if possible, relocate it away from the kitchen or bathroom. If nuisance alarms are a persistent problem, look for a different type of smoke alarm.
- **Use the test button to test your smoke alarms at least monthly.** The test feature tests all electronic functions and is safer than testing with a controlled fire (matches, lighters, cigarettes). If the smoke alarm manufacturer's instructions permit the use of an aerosol smoke product for testing the smoke alarm, and you prefer that method, choose one that has been listed (examined and tested to appropriate product safety standards) by a third-party product testing laboratory, and use it in accordance with the product instructions.
- **If you have battery-powered smoke alarms, replace the batteries at least once a year.** (Replace the batteries in your [carbon monoxide \(CO\) alarms](#) at the same time you replace your smoke alarm batteries.) Some agencies recommend that you replace batteries when the time changes from standard to daylight savings each spring and then back again in the fall. "Change your clock, change your batteries." Replacing batteries this often certainly will not hurt; however, data show that fresh batteries will last at least a year, so more frequent replacement is not necessary unless the smoke alarm begins to chirp. Also, Arizona, Hawaii, the eastern portion of Indiana, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and Guam do not use daylight savings time. Pick an easy-to-remember anniversary, such as your birthday or a national holiday, as the day to change the batteries each year.
- **Replace your smoke alarms every 10 years.** This is the recommendation of the National Fire Protection Association and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. Smoke alarms become less sensitive over time.
- **Be sure to install smoke alarms in areas where pets are and in other buildings that house animals where humans can hear them.**