

SAFETY TIPS for Smoke Alarms

On average, 8 people die in a home fire each day in the U.S.—almost 3,000 people every year. While working smoke alarms cut the chance of dying in a fire nearly in half, roughly two-thirds of all home fire deaths occur in homes without working smoke alarms, according to statistics from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

Newer smoke alarm recommendations and technologies now provide greater levels of home fire protection than ever before. Unfortunately, many people are unaware of these advances and lack the recommended level of residential smoke alarm protection as a result. Their homes may not be equipped with the appropriate number of alarms, or they may be relying on outdated or nonfunctional devices.

ESFI offers the following tips for making sure smoke alarms are installed and working properly:

Installation Tips

- Smoke alarms should be installed in every bedroom, outside each sleeping area, and on every level of the home.
- For the best protection, smoke alarms should be interconnected, so that they all sound if one sounds. Manufacturers are now producing battery operated alarms that are interconnected by wireless technology.
- Combination smoke alarms that include both ionization and photoelectric alarms offer the most comprehensive protection. An ionization alarm is more responsive to flames, while a photoelectric alarm is more responsive to a smoldering fire.
- Hardwired smoke alarms with battery backups are considered to be more reliable than those operated solely by batteries.
- Purchase smoke alarms from a reputable retailer that you trust.
- Choose alarms that bear the label of a nationally-recognized testing laboratory.
- Install smoke alarms at least 10 feet from cooking appliances to reduce the possibility of nuisance alarms.



- Alarms installed between 10-20 feet of a cooking appliance must have a hush feature to temporarily reduce the alarm sensitivity or must be a photoelectric alarm.
- If possible, alarms should be mounted in the center of a ceiling. If mounted on a wall, they should be located 6 to 12 inches below the ceiling.
- Avoid locating alarms near bathrooms, heating appliances, windows or ceiling fans.

Maintenance Tips

- Smoke alarms should be tested once a month by pressing the TEST button.
- Smoke alarm batteries should be replaced in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, at least once a year. If an alarm "chirps" or "beeps" to indicate low batteries, they should be replaced immediately.
- Occasionally dust or lightly vacuum the exterior of the alarm to remove dust and cobwebs.
- Smoke alarms should be replaced in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, at least every ten years.
- Never paint over a smoke alarm.

We'd like to thank the Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) for these helpful guidelines.