

Know Your Alarm! Know Your Battery!

In the event of a fire, properly installed and maintained smoke alarms can save your life. These smoke alarms provide early detection of a fire to allow your family time to escape safely.

There are many different types of smoke alarms on the market. How do you know which one to buy? What kinds of batteries do they take? These are all common questions regarding a very important part of fire detection in your home.

What types of alarms are out there?

There are many brands of smoke alarms available for purchase, but there are two basic types: photoelectric and ionization alarms.

Ionization alarms sound quickly when a flaming, fast moving fire occurs. *Photoelectric alarms* are quicker at sensing smoldering, smoky fires. There is also a combination alarm available that combines ionization and photoelectric alarms in one, called a *dual sensor smoke alarm*.

What about special alarms for people with hearing disabilities?

Smoke alarms are also manufactured to meet the needs of those with hearing disabilities. These alarms can be equipped with strobes that flash and/or vibrate to assist in alerting those who cannot hear the standard smoke alarm.

Where should smoke alarms be installed?

Smoke alarms should be installed inside and outside all sleeping areas, and on every level of the home, including the basement. Since smoke and poisonous gases rise, installing smoke alarms on the ceiling is ideal and will provide the earliest detection.

How do I install smoke alarms?

Smoke alarms that are hard-wired into the home will need a certified electrician to install them. Battery operated smoke alarms can be installed with as little as a screwdriver. Follow the manufacturer's instructions to install properly.

How long do smoke alarms last?

Smoke alarms must be tested monthly to ensure they are working properly. The entire alarm should be replaced every 8-10 years.

What kinds of batteries do they take?

Smoke alarms that are hard wired into your home will need a battery backup, which is typically a 9-volt battery. Standard battery powered alarms can either use 9-volt batteries or long lasting batteries, all of which can be found in local hardware stores. 9-volt batteries need to be replaced once per year.

Long lasting batteries are intended to be installed when the smoke alarm goes in, and the entire unit (including the battery) can be replaced after 8-10 years. No matter what kind of battery you have, they will need to be tested every month.

There are many types and brands of smoke alarms on the market. Remember to...

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