

Why should I have a working smoke alarm?

A properly installed and maintained smoke alarm is the only thing in your home that can alert you and your family to a fire 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Whether you're awake or asleep, a working smoke alarm is constantly on alert, scanning the air for fire and smoke.

Install smoke alarms in key areas of your home

Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, including the basement. Many fatal fires begin late at night or early in the morning, so the U.S. Fire Administration recommends installing smoke alarms both inside and outside of sleeping areas.

Since smoke and many deadly gases rise, installing your smoke alarms at the proper level will provide you with the earliest warning possible. Always follow the manufacturer's installation instructions.

Hardwired smoke alarms should be installed by a qualified electrician.

Smoke alarm maintenance

Is your smoke alarm still working? Smoke alarms *must* be maintained! A smoke alarm with a dead or missing battery is the same as having no smoke alarm at all.

A smoke alarm only works when it is properly installed **and** maintained. Depending on how your smoke alarm is powered (9-volt, 10-year lithium, or hardwired), you'll have to maintain it according to manufacturer's instructions. General guidelines for smoke alarm maintenance:

Smoke alarm powered by a 9-volt battery

- Test the alarm monthly.
- Replace the batteries at least once per year.
- The entire smoke alarm unit should be replaced every 8-10 years.

Smoke alarm powered by a 10-year lithium (or "long life") battery

- Test the alarm monthly.
- Since you cannot (and should not) replace the lithium battery, the entire smoke alarm unit should be replaced according to manufacturer's instructions.

Smoke alarm that is hardwired into the home's electrical system

- Test the alarm monthly.
- The backup battery should be replaced at least once per year.
- The entire smoke alarm unit should be replaced every 8-10 years.

Never disable a smoke alarm while cooking

A smoke alarm is just doing its job when it sounds while you're cooking or taking a shower with lots of steam.

- If a smoke alarm sounds while you're cooking or taking a shower with lots of steam, **do not** remove the battery. You should:
 - Open a window or door and press the hush" button,
 - Wave a towel at the alarm to clear the air, or
 - Move the entire alarm several feet away from the location.

Disabling a smoke alarm or removing the battery can be a deadly mistake.