



Smoke Alarms

Smoke Alarm Do's and Don'ts

Roughly 70 percent of home fire deaths occur in homes with no smoke detectors or with smoke detectors that are not functioning properly. Smoke detectors are the great safety success story of the 20th century but they are only useful when they are working.

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 early warning to your family and give you time to escape.

Where/how do I install my smoke alarms?

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 gasses rise, install your smoke alarms on the ceiling, or 6-8 inches from the ceiling on the wall.

Per WAC 51-51-0314 Section R314 Smoke alarms shall be installed in the following locations:

1. In each sleeping room.
2. Outside each sleeping area in the immediate vicinity of the bedrooms.
3. On each story of your home, including basements and habitable attics (but not including crawl spaces and uninhabitable attics). In dwellings or dwelling units with split levels and without an intervening door between the adjacent levels, a smoke alarm installed on the upper level shall suffice for the adjacent lower level provided that the lower level is less than one full story below the upper level
4. Smoke alarms shall be installed not less than 3 feet (914 mm) horizontally from the door or opening of a bathroom that contains a bathtub or shower unless this would prevent placement of a smoke alarm required by Section R314.3
5. In napping areas in a family home child care.

What if I am making repairs, alterations or additions?

When alterations, repairs or additions requiring a permit occur, or when one or more sleeping rooms are added or created in existing dwellings, the individual dwelling unit shall be equipped with smoke alarms located as required for new dwellings. (Per WAC 51-51-0314 - R314.3.1)

How do I keep my smoke alarm working?

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

1. Check the battery in your smoke detector once a month.
2. Replace the battery at least once a year. The Camas-Washougal Fire Department recommends that you change the battery in your smoke alarm when you change your clocks each fall.



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3. Keep your smoke detectors clean. Dust and debris can interfere with how smoke alarms work. Regularly vacuum your detector to keep it working right.

What's that 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. You may not remember to put the batteries back in the alarm when you are finished 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 detectors?

Smoke detectors should function properly for ten years, but after that time they should be replaced. 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 a smoke alarm?

The Camas-Washougal Fire Department can provide and install smoke alarms in homes for senior citizens, disabled persons, and people who are living on a low income. If you meet these requirements and are in need of a battery only smoke detector or help installing new batteries, please contact the Camas-Washougal Fire Department to make arrangements.

What if I rent?

Your landlord is required by law (RCW 48.48.140) to provide you with a working smoke alarms at the time you move in. Tenants are required to maintain the alarms in working order during the time that they occupy the dwelling.

For More Information Contact:

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