

STATE FIRE MARSHAL



Smoke Alarm Tips and Information

Smoke alarms are an essential part of home fire safety. To keep your family safe from fire, remember and make use of the following information. Your lives may depend on it.

WHY SMOKE ALARMS? In the U.S., roughly 80 percent of fire deaths result from fires in homes without working smoke alarms. In fact, half of home fire deaths occur in the six percent of homes without any smoke alarms.

BUY THE BEST - Smoke alarms can be electrically connected, battery powered, or a combination of both. This combination of power sources and a pause feature to reduce nuisance alarms are highly recommended.

ONE ALARM IS NOT ENOUGH - The National Fire Alarm code recommends a minimum of one smoke alarm on each level of a home, including one alarm inside each bedroom, in new construction, and one outside each sleeping area.

INSTALL ALARMS CORRECTLY - Because smoke rises, alarms should be placed on the ceiling. If this can't be done, install them as high on the wall as possible. Follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully. Avoid locating alarms near bathrooms, heating appliances, windows, or ceiling fans

TEST YOUR ALARMS REGULARLY - Every month, test your smoke alarms by pushing the "test" button. Then test them using smoke from a smoldering cotton string. Follow testing instructions in your owner's manual.

GENTLY VACUUM YOUR SMOKE ALARMS EVERY SIX MONTHS - Dust can clog a smoke alarm, making it ineffective. Carefully vacuum the inside of a battery-powered unit using a soft bristle brush. If your alarms are electrically connected, turn off the power and vacuum the outside vents only. Test your alarms after cleaning them.

REPLACE YOUR OLD ALARMS - Smoke alarms don't last forever. Those more than 10 years old should be replaced.

PLAN YOUR ESCAPE - Working smoke alarms are essential, but they don't save lives unless everyone knows how to get out of the house safely. The peak time for residential fires is between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. Make sure everyone knows how to escape when the alarm sounds, whether awake or sleeping at the time. Plan two ways out of each room and a pre-arranged meeting place outside.

Last Modified: April 28, 2006

For additional information, contact **Robert Dahm**, Minnesota State Fire Marshal Division, at Robert.Dahm@state.mn.us or (651)215-0500.
Minnesota State Fire Marshal Division
444 Cedar St., Suite 145
St. Paul, MN 55101-5145 651-215-0500 – voice, 651-215-0525 – fax 651-282-6555 - TDD