

Smoke Alarms Save Lives

All seasoned firefighters have heard the explanation, “The smoke alarm woke me up. I was able to wake the rest of the family and get them out just ahead of the fire.” A smoke alarm is the best early fire detection device available to the average homeowner.

Why are smoke alarms needed?

Fire spreads very quickly. A fire which burns for one minute in a house will grow to three times original size; eleven times its original size in four minutes; and fifty times its size in only six minutes.

90-95% of people who die in fires are killed by the smoke. Smoke is full of carbon monoxide. Carbon monoxide replaces the oxygen in our bodies and suffocates us. Many people think they will smell smoke and wake up. Actually, smoke puts you into a deeper sleep. People who are awakened by a fire have inhaled enough smoke that they can't think clearly. In their stupor, they make wrong decisions as they try to escape and are killed.

What kind of smoke alarm should I buy?

Both battery-powered and house current-powered smoke alarms do a good job. Make sure the one you choose has been tested by a nationally-recognized testing laboratory.

How many smoke alarms do I need?

There should be at least one alarm on every floor of the house except attics, unless the attic space is used for sleeping. Additional alarms will increase the chance of early detection.

Where should I place a alarm?

Smoke alarms should be placed near bedrooms either on the ceiling—at least 15 to 30 centimetres away from the wall—or on the wall, 15 to 30 centimetres down from the ceiling. This allows the alarm to sense the smoke as it approaches the sleeping area.

What maintenance do smoke alarms require?

Test the alarm at least monthly by pushing the test button. Once a year vacuum the dust from alarm air vents. Battery operated alarms should have the battery replaced each year or when the low-battery warning sounds. Perhaps the best reminder to change your battery is when you change your clock in the fall: “Change Your Clock.....Change Your Battery”

Is there anything else I should do to make my home or cottage safer?

Yes! Hold practice drills with your whole family so they will know what to do if your alarm ever alerts you of an emergency.

Install a carbon monoxide alarm as well. Keep a fire extinguisher handy.

Additional information available from Ontario Fire Marshal's Public Fire Safety Council (www.firesafetycouncil.com)