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SMOKE ALARMS

In the event of a fire, it is essential that your home is equipped with correctly installed and maintained smoke alarms. More than half of all fatal fires in the home occur at night while people are sleeping. Smoke alarms cut the risk of dying in a home fire almost in half.

Placing Smoke Alarms

To ensure that a smoke alarm will work as it was designed, it must be properly installed.

- Smoke alarms should be installed on every level of your home, including the basement.
- Place smoke alarms inside every bedroom and one outside each sleeping area in your home.
- Smoke alarms should be installed away from the kitchen. Generally, they should be at least 10 feet from a cooking appliance.
- Follow the manufacturer's installation instructions. Typically, proper placement is on the ceiling. However, if a wall must be used, install the smoke alarm(s) at a minimum distance of 4" and a maximum distance of 12" from the ceiling.
- Be sure that any unit you purchase carries a UL or FM approved label.
- Smoke alarms should be replaced every 10 years.
- Consider purchasing a smoke alarm(s) with a lithium cell battery with a life of up to 10 years.

Maintenance

It is estimated that half of all smoke alarms are not working as they should because batteries are worn out or have been removed. To insure your smoke alarm is working, test it monthly by pushing the test button. The following maintenance tips will help you keep your smoke alarm in proper working order:

- Smoke alarms should be vacuumed twice a year.
- Install new batteries twice a year or more frequently if the smoke alarm "beeps" to warn that battery power is low. Pick a date that will be easy to remember. Many people change batteries when they change their clocks for daylight savings time.

When an Alarm Sounds

Smoke alarms are designed to warn you of smoke or fire while there is still time to escape. Since every second is vital, make sure your household has a fire escape plan in case a smoke alarm sounds. Elements of a good fire escape plan include the following:

- Plan two ways out of every room. (Determine whether a ladder is needed. If it is, make sure everyone knows how to set it up and use it.)
- Make sure you can open all doors and windows.
- Stay low under smoke where the air is fresher and easier to breathe.
- Designate a family meeting place outside the home.



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- Once outside, stay out and call 911.
- Do not re-enter the home. It's the responsibility of the emergency personnel.

Acknowledgments:

The Minnesota Fire Safety Project

National Fire Protection Association



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