



Smoke Detectors

Every year, fires in the home kill 3000 people in the United States. Most of the deaths occur at night while the victims are asleep. Properly located and maintained smoke detectors can save many of those lives, prevent injuries, and protect personal property. Is your home properly protected?

Modern standards for residential construction require a smoke detector for each bedroom, a smoke detector in each hallway that leads to a bedroom and at least one detector on each level of the house. Additionally, the detectors must be wired into the house current on dedicated circuitry and contain a back-up source of power. The advantage to this modern system is that all detectors will sound when any single detector is activated. This gives an earlier warning of fire and offers the best opportunity for all occupants to evacuate safely.

Battery powered smoke detectors are common in most older homes, and can still perform adequately to protect your home, your family, and your property. The greatest disadvantage offered by battery-powered detectors is the necessity to change the batteries on a regular basis, at least once per year. Many of the homes that I inspect, have detectors with dead batteries. The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CSPC) recommends tying battery changes to either the spring or the fall time change, so that the changing of batteries will not be forgotten.

Regardless of the power source, house current, or battery, the CSPC recommends checking all of the detectors in your home at least once per month. If this check is performed in conjunction with a family fire drill, an effective evacuation plan will evolve which may save the life or lives of family members in the future. Teach small children how to evacuate the house, and where to gather after exiting the house. When the monthly test is performed, all members of the family should evacuate to the meeting area. If a fire should ever occur in your home, everyone will automatically know what to do.

If your home contains any combustion sources, such as a fireplace, woodstove, natural gas fired appliances, or oil-fired appliances, then a carbon monoxide detector is an advisable addition to your detector array. Follow the manufacturer's directions regarding placement of Carbon monoxide detectors.

Smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors can be effective protection devices to protect lives and property. Following a few simple guidelines regarding placement and upkeep will help to ensure a safe home environment for you and your family.

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