



## HOME SMOKE ALARMS

# FIRE SAFETY

*Make Your Place.....Fire Safe!*

### **Smoke Alarms Save Lives**

The majority of fatal home fires happen at night, when people are asleep. Contrary to popular belief, the smell of smoke may not wake a sleeping person. The poisonous gases and smoke produced by a fire can numb the senses and put you into a deeper slumber.

Inexpensive household smoke alarms sound an alarm, alerting you to a fire. By giving you time to escape, smoke alarms cut your risk of dying in a home fire nearly in half. Smoke alarms save so many lives that the Ontario Building Code has laws requiring them in the new construction of private homes.

### **Choosing An Alarm**

Be sure the smoke alarms you buy carry the label of an independent testing laboratory such as ULC or CSA.

Several types of alarms are available. Some run on batteries, other on household electric current. Some detect smoke using an "ionization" sensor, others use a "photoelectric" detection system. All approved smoke alarms, regardless of the type, will offer adequate protection provided they are installed and maintained properly.

### **Is One Enough**

Every home should have a smoke alarm outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home, including the basement. On floors without bedrooms, alarms should be installed in or near living areas, such as dens, living rooms or family rooms.

Be sure everyone sleeping in your home can hear your smoke alarms' alarms. If any residents are hearing impaired or sleep with bedroom door closed, install additional alarms inside sleeping areas as well. There are special smoke alarms for the hearing impaired; these flash a light in addition to sounding an audible alarm.

For extra protection, fire departments suggest installing alarms in dining rooms, furnace rooms, utility rooms and hallways. Smoke alarms are not recommended for kitchens, bathrooms or garages - where cooking fumes, steam or exhaust fumes could set off false alarms - or for attics and other unheated spaces where humidity and temperature changes might affect an alarm's operation.

**Where to Install**

Because smoke rises, mount alarms high on a wall or on the ceiling. Wall-mounted units should be mounted so the top of the alarm is 6 to 12 inches (15 to 30 cm) from the ceiling. A ceiling-mounted alarm should be attached at least 4 inches (10 cm) from the nearest wall. In a room with a pitched ceiling, mount the alarm at or near the ceiling's highest point.

In stairways with no doors at the top or bottom, position smoke alarms anywhere in the path of smoke moving up the stairs. But always position smoke alarms at the bottom of closed stairways, such as those leading to the basement, because dead air trapped near the door at the top of a stairway could prevent smoke from reaching an alarm located at the top.

Do not install a smoke alarm too near a window, or forced-air register where drafts could interfere with the alarm's operation. Always install a smoke alarm in a hallway that services sleeping areas.

**Installation**

Most battery-powered smoke alarms and alarms that plug into the wall outlets can be installed using only a drill and a screwdriver by following the manufacturer's instructions. Plug-in alarms must have restraining devices so they cannot be unplugged by accident. Alarms can also be hard-wired into a building's electrical system. Hard-wired alarms should be installed by a qualified electrician. Never connect a smoke alarm to a circuit that can be turned off by a wall switch.

**False Alarms**

Cooking vapours and steam sometimes set off a smoke alarm. To correct this, try moving the alarm away from the kitchen or bathroom or install an exhaust fan. Cleaning your alarm regularly, according to the manufacturer's instructions, may also help. If "nuisance alarms" persist, do not disable the alarm. Replace it!

**Maintenance**

- Only a functioning smoke alarm can protect you.
- Never disable an alarm by borrowing its battery for another use.
- Following the manufacturer's instructions, test all your smoke alarms monthly and install new batteries at least once a year. A good reminder is when you change your clocks in the spring or fall: change your clock, change your battery.
- Clean your smoke alarms using a vacuum cleaner without removing the alarm's cover.
- Never paint a smoke alarm.
- Smoke alarms do not last forever. Replace any smoke alarm that is more than 10 years old.

**Plan and Practice**

- Make sure everyone is familiar with the sound of the alarm.
- Plan escape routes. Know at least two ways out of each room. Agree on a meeting place outside your home where all residents will gather after they escape. Practice your escape plan at least twice a year.
- Remove obstructions from doors and windows needed for escape.
- Make sure everyone in the household can unlock doors and windows quickly, even in the dark. Windows or doors with security bars should be equipped with quick-release devices and everyone in the household should know how to use them.
- When an alarm sounds, leave immediately. Go directly to your outside meeting place and call the fire department.
- Once you're out, stay out. Never return to a burning building.

**Mandatory Requirement**

- The Ontario Building Code requires a smoke alarm be installed on every level in each new home being constructed.
- The Ontario Fire Code requires smoke alarms installed between each sleeping area and the remainder of the dwelling unit in all existing homes - regardless of age! There is a minimum \$200 fine for not having or not maintaining a smoke alarm.
- Should you be in need of a smoke alarm, or require further information contact the Fort Frances Fire and Rescue Service.

**Need assistance.....**please contact the *Sioux Narrows - Nestor Falls Fire Rescue Services* at 807-226-5241 or 1-888-408-3812.