

SENIOR FIRE SAFETY TIPS:

(These tips are printed in larger font for easier reading)

Install smoke alarms correctly and test them regularly!

Because fire can grow and spread so quickly, having working smoke alarms in your home can mean the difference between life and death. But these life-saving devices are only effective when they're working properly. Smoke alarms with batteries that are dead, disconnected, or missing can't alert you to the dangers of smoke and fire. Follow these tips to ensure that your smoke alarms are installed correctly and tested regularly.

Once the alarm sounds, you may have as few as two minutes to escape. By learning how to effectively use the smoke alarm's early warning to get out safely, you'll reduce your risk of dying in a home fire.

The right way to install smoke alarms

- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, including the basement, making sure that there is an alarm outside every separate sleeping area. New homes are required to have a smoke alarm in every sleeping room and all smoke alarms must be interconnected.

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- Hard-wired smoke alarms operate on your household electrical current. They can be interconnected so that every alarm sounds regardless of the fire's location. This is an advantage in early warning, because it gives occupants extra time to escape if they are in one part of the home and a fire breaks out in another part. Alarms that are hard-wired should have battery backups in case of a power outage, and should be installed by a qualified electrician.
- If you sleep with bedroom doors closed, have a qualified electrician install interconnected smoke alarms in each room so that when one alarm sounds, they all sound.
- If you, or someone in your home is deaf or hard of hearing, consider installing an alarm that combines flashing lights, vibration and/or sound.
- Mount smoke alarms high on walls or ceilings (remember, smoke rises). Ceiling mounted alarms should be installed at least four inches away from the nearest wall; wall-mounted alarms should be installed four to 12 inches away from the ceiling.

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- If you have ceilings that are pitched, install the alarm near the ceiling's highest point.
- Don't install smoke alarms near windows, doors, or ducts where drafts might interfere with their operation.
- Never paint smoke alarms. Paint, stickers, or other decorations could keep the alarms from working.

A life-saving test: check your smoke alarms regularly

- Test your smoke alarms once a month, following the manufacturer's instructions.
- Replace the batteries in your smoke alarm once a year, or as soon as the alarm "chirps" warning that the battery is low. **Hint:** schedule battery replacements for the same day you change your clocks from daylight savings time to standard time in the fall.
- Never "borrow" a battery from a smoke alarm. Smoke alarms can't warn you of fire if their batteries are missing or have been disconnected.

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- Don't disable smoke alarms even temporarily. If your smoke alarm is sounding "nuisance alarms," try relocating it farther from kitchens or bathrooms, where cooking fumes and steam can cause the alarm to sound.
- Regularly vacuuming or dusting your smoke alarms, following the manufacturer's instructions, can keep them working properly.
- Smoke alarms don't last forever. Replace yours once every 10 years. If you can't remember how old the alarm is, then it's probably time for a new one.
- Consider installing smoke alarms with "long-life" (10-year) batteries.
- Plan regular fire drills to ensure that everyone knows exactly what to do when the smoke alarm sounds. Hold a drill at night to make sure that sleeping family members awaken at the sound of the alarm. Some studies have shown that some children may not awaken to the sound of the smoke alarm. **Know what your grandchild will do before a fire occurs.**

Tips for people with disabilities

Smoke alarms with flashing lights

There are special features available for people who have disabilities. People who are deaf or hard of hearing should use smoke alarms with strobe (flashing) lights. Make sure that the alarm you are using has been tested by an independent testing laboratory. The alarms for sleeping areas with strobe lights are required to be of a special high intensity that can wake a sleeping person.

Most major smoke alarm companies offer alarms with strobe lights. For information on availability and pricing, go to the manufacturers' Web site.

Manufacturers, distributors, and retailers of smoke alarms that meet U.L. standard 1971 for people who are deaf or hard of hearing:

- Ace Hardware Corporation
- Wal – Mart
- Home Depot
- Meijers
- Lowes
- BRK Electronics
- Gentex Corporation
- Kidde Fire Safety
- Menard, Inc.

Smoke alarms with 10- year batteries

Alarms with a 10-year lithium battery eliminate the problem of having to change batteries. The battery is supposed to last the life of an alarm, which is 10 years. Ten-year battery alarms still need to be tested in accordance with manufacturers' instructions at least once a month.

Features that make testing the alarm easier

Some alarms are equipped with large, easy to push test buttons. Alarms that can be tested by using a flashlight or television remote are particularly helpful for people with mobility disabilities, people who are blind or have low vision, or for older adults.

Avoiding nuisance alarms

Alarms that go off because of burnt toast, steam, or other non-threatening sources can be a real nuisance and can discourage people from using smoke alarms. Use alarms with a silencing feature that can be pressed to delay the alarm for a short period time. If the smoke does not clear in a certain amount of time the alarm will sound again.

Installation and maintenance

Install smoke alarms on every level of your home and outside each separate sleeping area. If you sleep with bedroom doors closed, have a qualified electrician install interconnected smoke alarms in each room so when one

sounds, they all sound. Install a new battery in all conventional alarms at least once a year. Test your alarm at least once a month, following the manufacturer's instructions.

Escape

Include everyone in your home and make a home escape plan making provisions for anyone who has a disability. Practice your plan at least twice a year.

(Source: www.nfpa.org)

Cooking

Never leave food cooking in the oven or on top of the stove un-attended. If you are distracted while cooking by a telephone call or visitor, please take a cooking utensil such as a spoon or fork with you so you will remember that something is cooking. Never sleep with something cooking on the stove or in the oven.

Heating

Have your heating system checked by a licensed contractor at least once a year if possible to assure proper operation. Never use a space heater near drapes or curtains. Never leave a space heater on if you leave the house. Make sure the space heater is equipped with a safety device to shut it off if it falls over.

Carbon Monoxide

If you have gas appliances you should have at least one carbon monoxide detector in your home. These detectors should be mounted at the highest level of the home.

Example: If you live and sleep on the second floor, the detector should be mounted outside the bedrooms on the ceiling of the second floor. If you have a two-story home with basement you should have one carbon monoxide detector on the first and second floors.

Storage

Keep combustible storage like paper, clothes and cardboard away from heating appliances such as Water Heaters, Furnaces and Space Heaters. These combustibles can catch fire from heat produced by the appliance.

You can always contact your local fire department for more information on fire safety practices and products to protect yourselves from the hazards of fire.

The Coldwater Fire Department has a **home fire safety checklist program FREE OF CHARGE**, so you can survey your home to determine unknown hazards and evaluate your risks to fire or if you would like a member of the fire department to visit your home to evaluate fire risk, please contact the Coldwater Fire Marshal's Office at (517) 278-4177.