



Installing and Maintaining Your Smoke Detector

Where Should I Install Smoke Detectors?

Where you place smoke detectors depends on the size and layout of your home, and where people sleep in your home. Since the primary job of a smoke detector is to awaken sleeping persons and warn them of urgent danger, put your detector as close as possible to the bedrooms or other places where people frequently sleep. If two sleeping areas are separated, each should have its own detector. The hallway next to the bedrooms or other sleeping areas should be a priority location for detectors.

If bedroom doors are normally closed at night, detector locations within each bedroom might be considered, particularly if the occupant smokes in bed. Closed doors usually offer some protection against both fire and smoke from outside the room. However, they may make it more difficult to hear a detector alarm outside the bedroom. More significantly, they can keep smoke produced by a fire in a bedroom from reaching a detector in the hall.

In single floor homes, the detector should be placed in the hallway near the bedrooms. In a house where the bedrooms are upstairs, one detector should be near the top of the stairs to the bedroom area. The simplest rule for locating one smoke detector in your home should be “between the bedrooms and the rest of the house, but closer to the bedrooms.” If you are installing multiple detectors, put one near each sleeping area. It is also a good idea to make certain there is one on each level of the house. The basement ceiling, near the steps to the rest of the house, is another good location. **Don't put detectors within six inches of where walls and ceilings meet**, or near heating and cooling ducts or windows. Detectors located in these areas may not receive the flow of smoke required to activate the alarm.

How to Take Care of Your Smoke Detector

Monthly Testing

At least once every month, test your detector by holding the “TEST” button in. The unit's alarm should begin to sound within twenty seconds. To stop the alarm, release the button.

Replace Batteries

If your battery-powered detector begins to emit its low-power warning sound, remove the weak battery and replace it immediately with a fresh one. Have a new battery on hand always. It is recommended that the battery be changed twice a year. A good time to do this is when the clocks are changed between Eastern Standard Time to Daylight Savings Time in the spring and fall.

Don't Play "False Alarm"

The detector is not a toy. Remind everyone in your family that it should not be operated, or even touched, except to test, maintain, and clean. Some authorities suggest using the detector test feature to operate the alarm as part of a family "fire drill" on occasion. Operating the alarm excessively draws heavily on battery power, and may cause a malfunction when it's needed most.

Nuisance Alarms

Do not respond to alarms caused by cooking, fireplaces, etc. by disconnecting the battery or taking the detector down. Either fan away the smoke or relocate the detector.