



City of St. Joseph

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Public Safety Department

Smoke Detectors

Smoke detectors that are properly installed and maintained play a vital role in reducing fire deaths and injuries. Having a working smoke alarm cuts **the chances of dying in a reported fire in half.**

Smoke detectors save lives. Almost two-thirds of home fire deaths resulted from fires in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms. When there is a fire, smoke spreads fast and you need smoke alarms to give you time to get out.

- Install smoke detectors in every bedroom, outside each separate sleeping area and on every level of the home, including the basement. Interconnect all smoke alarms throughout the home. When one sounds, they all sound.
- An ionization smoke detector is generally more responsive to flaming fires, and a photoelectric smoke alarm is generally more responsive to smoldering fires. For the best protection, both types of detectors or a combination alarm (photoelectric and ionization) should be installed in homes.
- Test detectors at least monthly by pushing the test button.
- Smoke rises; install smoke detectors following manufacturer's instructions high on a wall or on a ceiling. Save manufacturer's instructions for testing and maintenance.
- Replace batteries in all smoke detectors at least once a year. If an alarm "chirps", warning the battery is low, replace the battery right away.
- Replace all smoke detectors, including alarms that use 10-year batteries and hard-wired alarms, when they are 10 year old or sooner if they do not respond properly.
- Be sure the smoke detector has the label of a recognized testing laboratory.
- Alarms that are hard-wired (and include battery backup) must be installed by a qualified electrician.
- If cooking fumes or steam sets off nuisance alarms, replace the alarm with an alarm that has a "hush" button. A "hush" button will reduce the detector's sensitivity for a short period of time.
- An ionization detector with a hush button or a photoelectric detector should be used if the detector is within 20 feet of a cooking appliance.
- Smoke detectors that include a recordable voice announcement in addition to the usual alarm sound, may be helpful in waking children through the use of a familiar voice.
- Smoke detectors are available for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. These devices use strobe lights. Vibration devices can be added to these alarms
- Smoke detectors are an important part of a home fire escape plan.

All this information and more can be found on the National Fire Protection Assoc. or NFPA web site:
<http://www.nfpa.org/categoryList.asp?categoryID=278>