



Smoke Detector Program



A Safety Program Offered by the Upper Arlington Fire Division

While the National Fire Protection Association estimates that 93 percent of homes have at least one smoke detector, almost half of home fires and three-fifths of fire deaths occur in homes with no alarms. Even more critical is the fact that there are now more homes with smoke alarms that don't work, creating a false sense of security. Approximately one-third of homes with smoke detectors that experience fires have smoke detectors that aren't working, resulting in hundreds of deaths each year. Having a working smoke detector in your home can cut your chance of dying in a home fire in half. Regardless of where a fire starts, working smoke detectors alert people to fire, and "buy" valuable seconds in which to escape.

Please use the information in this fact sheet to do your part to protect yourself and the lives of those you care about.

Choosing a Smoke Detector

Only buy and use smoke detectors that have been approved by an independent testing laboratory. Different types are available - some use an "ionization" sensor, triggered when smoke interferes with an electric current produced in the sensor. A "photoelectric" alarm is triggered when smoke interferes with a tiny light source shining on a light sensitive sensor. All tested and labeled smoke detectors offer adequate protection if properly installed and maintained. **The official recommendation of the Upper Arlington Fire Division is to use combination photoelectric/ionization units as you upgrade or add detectors to your home.** These units provide early warning of both flames and/or smoke.

Recommended Quantity of Smoke Detectors

- Each home should have a smoke detector outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home, including the basement.
- On floors without sleeping areas, detectors should be placed in or near living areas such as dens, living rooms and family rooms.
- Detectors are not recommended for kitchens, bathrooms or garages, where cooking fumes, steam and exhaust fumes could set off a false alarm.
- Don't install smoke detectors near windows, ceiling fans, doors, or forced-air registers, where drafts could interfere with operation.
- Most fire deaths occur at night, when people are asleep. In fact, smoke and poisonous gas from a fire can actually induce a deeper sleep. Be sure that everyone sleeping in your home can hear your detectors' alarms.
- If any residents are hearing impaired or sleep with bedroom doors closed, install additional detectors inside sleeping areas.

Placement

- Smoke rises, so it is advisable to place smoke detectors high on a wall or on the ceiling. Wall-mounted units should be placed four-to-12 inches from the ceiling. A ceiling-mounted detector should be placed at least four inches from the nearest wall.
- In stairways with no doors at the top or bottom, position smoke detectors anywhere in the path of smoke moving up the stairs. Position detectors at the bottom of closed stairways, such as those leading from the basement. Dead air trapped at the top of a stairway could prevent smoke from reaching a detector located at the top.

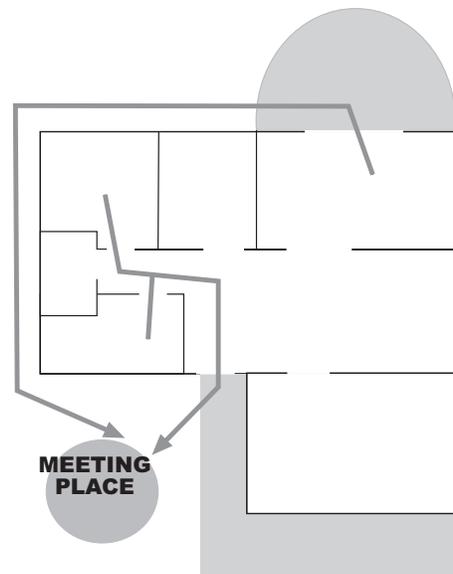
Maintenance

- **Test all your smoke detectors monthly**, by pressing the "test" button. If you can't reach the smoke detector, use a broom handle to reach the "test" button.
- Install new batteries at least once a year, or when a detector "chirps," which indicates the battery is getting low.
- Never disable a detector by "borrowing" the battery for another use.
- Clean smoke detectors using a vacuum cleaner.
- Never paint any part of a smoke detector. If decorating a room or doing work that could send a lot of dust into the air, cover the alarm with a shield of some sort, then remove it as soon as you have finished.
- Replace any smoke detector that is 10 years old or more. Detectors can, over time, lose their sensitivity to smoke.

Plan and Practice

- Familiarize yourself and others with the sound of each smoke detector.
- Establish an emergency exit plan with escape routes (at least two ways out of each room). Agree on a meeting place outside your home where everyone should gather once they've escaped. Practice your plan at least twice a year.
- Keep all windows and doors free of obstructions and make sure every member of the household can unlock windows and doors quickly.
- When an alarm sounds, leave immediately and go straight to your meeting place. Call 9-1-1 from a neighbor's phone or portable phone.
- Once you're out, stay out.

Know Your Escape Routes



Problems

- If an alarm goes off repeatedly for no apparent reason, try battery replacement and cleaning, or determine whether the detector is too close to a kitchen or bathroom.
- If the detector continues to sound, it may be faulty and this would be an appropriate time to replace it with a new one.

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