



A Message From Fire Chief Don Horton

Remember, a Working Smoke Detector Can Save Lives.

Almost all households in the U.S. have at least one smoke alarm, yet in 2005-2009, smoke alarms were present in less than three-quarters (72%) of all reported home fires and operated in half (51%) of the reported home fires. ("Homes" includes one- and two-family homes, apartments, and manufactured housing.) More than one-third (38%) of all home fire deaths resulted from fires in homes with no smoke alarms, while one-quarter (24%) resulted from fires in homes in which smoke alarms were present, but did not operate.

The death rate per 100 reported fires was twice as high in homes without a working smoke alarm as it was in home fires with this protection. Hardwired smoke alarms are more reliable than those powered solely by batteries.

These estimates are based on data from the U.S. Fire Administration's (USFA's) National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) and the National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA's) annual fire department experience survey.

Smoke alarm safety tips

Install smoke alarms 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 alarm is generally more responsive to flaming fires, and a photoelectric smoke alarm is generally more responsive to smoldering fires. For the best protection, both of these types of alarms or a combination alarm (photoelectric and ionization) should be installed in homes.
- Test alarms at least monthly by pushing the test button.
- Smoke rises; install smoke alarms 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 alarms at least once a year. If an alarm "chirps", warning the battery is low, replace the battery right away.
- Replace all smoke alarms, including alarms that use 10-year batteries and hard-wired alarms, when they are 10 years old or sooner if they do not respond properly.
- Be sure the smoke alarm 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 alarm's sensitivity for a short period of time.
- An ionization alarm with a hush button or a photoelectric alarm should be used if the alarm is within 20 feet of a cooking appliance.
- Smoke alarms 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 alarms for people who are deaf or hard of hearing use strobe lights. Vibration devices can be added to these alarms.
- Smoke alarms are an important part of a home fire escape plan.

For a free smoke detector and or a free Home Safety Survey, please contact Portsmouth Fire, Rescue and Emergency Services Fire Marshal's Office at 393-8689.

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Fire Administration

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