

## **November NHFIRS Bulletin Volume 6, 2009**

### **SMOKE ALARMS**

In the event of a fire, a properly installed and maintained smoke alarm can save your life and those of your loved ones. Smoke alarms are a very important means of preventing home fire fatalities by providing an early warning signal so you and family can escape. Smoke alarms are available at nearly all hardware, department and discount stores. If you are unsure of where to buy one in your area contact your local fire department and department personnel will be able to provide you with some suggestions. Some fire departments may even offer smoke alarms at little to no cost.

When purchasing a smoke alarm, keep in mind there are two basic types: ionization and photoelectric. Both sense the presence of smoke differently.

- Ionization type smoke alarms tend to respond faster to the smoke produced by flaming fires than photoelectric type smoke alarms.
- Photoelectric type smoke alarms tend to respond faster to the smoke produced by smoldering fires than ionization type smoke alarms.

Because both ionization and photoelectric smoke alarms are better at detecting distinctly different yet potentially fatal fires, and because no one can predict what type of fire might start at home, the USFA recommends that every residence and place where people sleep be equipped with either (a) both ionization and photoelectric smoke alarms, or (b) dual sensor smoke alarms (which contain both ionization and photoelectric smoke sensors)

When installing smoke alarms always follow the manufacturer's installation instructions because there are differences between various brands. Install a smoke alarm on every floor of your home, even the basement. If you are uncomfortable standing on a ladder ask a friend or relative for help or ask your local fire department if they will install it for you. If your smoke alarms are hard-wired, that is wired into the electrical system, you will need to have a qualified electrician to do the installation or install replacements. Installation at the proper level will provide you with the earliest warning possible.

Remember to change your smoke alarm batteries at least once a year, maybe at Daylight Savings Time or on your Birthday. In both standard type battery-powered smoke alarms and hard-wired battery back-up smoke alarms, the batteries need to be replaced at least once every year. All smoke detectors should be replaced once every ten years..

If your smoke alarm goes off while you are cooking, then it is doing its job. Do not disable the smoke alarm, you may not remember to put the batteries back in. Instead, clear the air by waving a towel near the alarm, leaving the batteries in place. Tampering with smoke detectors in multi-unit dwellings, apartment buildings and hotels is a crime.

By simply testing and maintaining your smoke alarms you can prevent tragedies. All smoke alarms in your home should be tested once a month.

NHFIRS contact information:

NH State Fire Marshal's Office, ph 603-223-4289 or fax 603-223-4294

NHFIRS Section

Emily J. Smith, Data Control Clerk III

[emily.smith@dos.nh.gov](mailto:emily.smith@dos.nh.gov)

Deputy Fire Marshal, Rob Farley, NHFIRS Program Manager

[robert.farley@dos.nh.gov](mailto:robert.farley@dos.nh.gov)

NHFIRS data and questions should be emailed to [NHFIRS@dos.nh.gov](mailto:NHFIRS@dos.nh.gov)