

★  
**Working**  
**Smoke**  
**Alarms** ★



*new*  
**IT'S THE LAW**  
It's your life  
*as of March'06*



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# SMOKE ALARMS SAVE LIVES

The majority of fatal home fires happen at night, when people are asleep. Contrary to popular belief, the smell of smoke may not wake a sleeping person. The poisonous gases and smoke produced by a fire can numb the senses and put you in a deeper sleep, as well as make you unconscious. Inexpensive household smoke alarms sound a warning, alerting you to a fire. By giving you time to escape, smoke alarms reduce your risk of dying in a residential fire.

**In a real fire your family may have less than one minute to safely escape when the smoke alarm sounds.**

## Installation of Smoke Alarms IT'S THE LAW

The new law requires that every level of your home be equipped with a "working" smoke alarm.

*How does that affect your home?*

**For homes built from 1990 to present**, electrically interconnected smoke alarms are already located on each level. As long as they are "working", no action is required however it is recommended to replace smoke alarms that are older than 10 years.

**For homes built from 1975 to 1990**, an electric smoke alarm is located between sleeping areas and the remainder of the home. A new smoke alarm installed on other unprotected floor levels is required. It is also recommended to replace the original electric smoke alarm and battery operated smoke alarms that are older than 10 years.

**For homes built before 1975**, there likely are no electric smoke alarms. A "working" smoke alarm on every floor level is required. It is also recommended to replace any existing battery operated smoke alarms that are older than 10 years.

## Replacing Smoke Alarms

If you are replacing electric smoke alarms, they must be replaced with another electric smoke alarm, not battery. If you must replace an interconnected electric smoke alarm due to malfunction, be sure to replace them all with the same manufacturer make and model to ensure compatibility. When replacing old smoke alarms, consider ones that have enhanced features such as a battery back up (for electric) and a "hush" button to silence for false alarms.

# MAINTENANCE AND TESTING OF SMOKE ALARMS

- Only a functioning smoke alarm can protect you and your family.
- Never disable a smoke alarm by "borrowing" its battery for another use or remove batteries due to nuisance alarms.
- Every month, test your smoke alarms using the alarm test button. It's also a good idea to test the alarm periodically with smoke by using smouldering cotton string or an incense stick following the manufacturer's instructions.
- Install new batteries at least once a year. A good reminder is when you change your clocks, (in the spring or fall) change your battery. Use only manufacturer recommended alkaline batteries in a smoke alarm.
- Gently vacuum dust out of smoke alarms every six months following the manufacturer's instructions.
- Smoke alarms don't last forever. Replace any smoke alarm that is more than ten years old.

*NOTE: The use of the word home is generic and includes any type of residential occupancy.*



## IT'S THE LAW

1. Smoke alarms shall be maintained in operating condition by the owner.
2. In rental units, the landlord shall provide a copy of the smoke alarm manufacturer's maintenance instructions (or alternative approved by the Fire Chief) to the occupant.
3. No person shall intentionally disable a smoke alarm so as to make it inoperable.

# LAST BUT NOT LEAST

## Plan Your Escape

It is important for you to have a fire escape plan showing all possible exits.

If you live in a multi-storey apartment building, map out the routes to exit stairways on your floor.

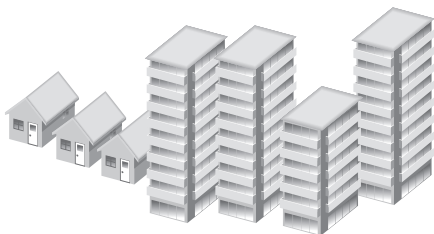
- Remember, **NEVER** use the elevators to escape fire. Agree on a meeting place outside your home where all family members will gather after they escape.
- Practice your escape plan at least twice a year. Start your fire drill with everyone in their beds, doors closed. One person sounds the alarm then each family member then leaves the home, crawling or staying low, and gathers at the meeting place. It's also a good idea to practice the drill blindfolded, or with your eyes closed to more closely experience the conditions of a real fire.

**Remember in a real fire once you're out stay out! Never return to a burning building!**

## Inspections Offences and Enforcement

**Part VI** of the Fire Protection and Prevention Act allows municipal fire inspectors to enter and inspect homes for the purposes of assessing fire safety. Such an inspection could include an assessment of the proper installation and maintenance of smoke alarms.

**Part VII** of the Fire Protection and Prevention Act sets fines for every person who contravenes any provision of the Act and the Ontario Fire Code, including requirements for the installation and maintenance of smoke alarms in residential dwellings.

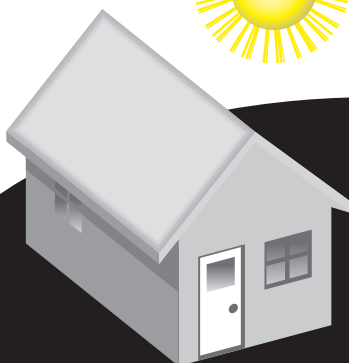


# CHOOSING A SMOKE ALARM

Required smoke alarms (installed under the Ontario Building Code) must be connected to a household electrical circuit. Additional smoke alarms or those installed under the provisions of the Ontario Fire Code may be connected to a household electrical circuit, battery operated or a combination of both. There are two types of smoke alarms, Ionization (rapid flaming) and Photoelectric (slow smouldering), that use two different operating principles. To properly protect your family, you should install both types of smoke alarms in your home. This is very important for two reasons.

- 1. Your family will be protected from both kinds of fire (rapid flaming and slow smouldering)
- 2. The correct choice of smoke alarms for each area of your home will eliminate or greatly reduce the number of 'nuisance' alarms. Frequent nuisance alarms can cause your family to ignore the potentially deadly situation they may face when the smoke alarm activates, should a real fire occur. **In a real fire your family may have less than one minute to safely escape when the smoke alarm sounds.** The following chart shows the relative benefits of both types of smoke alarms:

Smoke Alarm:	Ionization	Photoelectric
Battery powered	✓	✓
Electrically powered	✓	✓
Most frequently installed (low cost)	✓	
Best detection of rapid flaming fires	✓	
Best detection of slow smouldering fires		✓
Prone to nuisance alarms (near kitchens & bathrooms)	✓	
Seldom causes nuisance alarms		✓



## Fire prevention **IT'S UP TO YOU**

To provide the best fire protection for your family:

**PREVENT** fires from occurring by practising good fire safety habits

**DETECT** fires at the earliest stages by ensuring smoke alarms are properly installed and maintained.

**ESCAPE** fires by creating a family escape plan and practising at least twice per year.

For more information call  
our Public Education Office  
**905-615-4377** or visit our website  
[www.mississauga.ca](http://www.mississauga.ca)



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