



Short Safety Subject

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www.bragg.army.mil/psbc-bm/PubsAndForms/ShortSafetySubjects.htm

Smoke Detectors - A Life Saving Warning



Smoke detectors save lives every day. These small but effective devices are a vital fire safety early warning system, in both the workplace and the home. While it is critical to have smoke detectors installed both at home and at work, it is three times more important to have smoke detectors operating in the home.

Why? Because each year, more than three-quarters of the 4,500 fire-related deaths occur in the home.

And tragically, children under five years of age die at twice the rate of all others.

The majority of fatal fires in the home take place at night, when occupants are asleep. Contrary to common belief, the smell of smoke may not always wake a sleeping person. Poisonous gasses and the smoke produced by a fire can actually numb the senses, putting a person into a deeper sleep. Luckily, a small, inexpensive smoke detector, working properly, provides a wake-up alarm, and can reduce the risk of death by nearly 50%.

Placement of Home Smoke Detectors is Critical: Residences should have a smoke detector outside each sleeping area and on every level, including the basement. In new construction, the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) now requires a smoke detector in each sleeping room. On floors without bedrooms, they are to be installed within or near living areas. NFPA suggests that areas such as dining rooms, furnace rooms, and bonus rooms have detectors as well. Be aware that if you install these devices in kitchens, broiler or cooking fumes may cause frequent false alarms.

How Many Detectors are Needed? There are no specific guidelines on this. The correct number depends upon the configuration of the office or home, but it's better to have too many than too few. They should be installed high up on walls or on the ceiling. Since smoke rises, the first place it will be detected is near the ceiling.

Alarms are Critical for Some Work Facilities: This is particularly true for work locations that are remote from community fire departments, or in facilities that do not have fire sprinklers or other permanent fire suppression equipment. In these cases, smoke detectors provide the main source of warning to evacuate the building and call for help.

Maintenance, Inspection & Replacement. These devices must be cared for just as all important tools and equipment must. Only a functioning smoke detector can provide a life-saving warning. Manufacturers recommend testing all smoke detectors monthly, using the test button. And don't forget to replace the batteries at least once a year, unless they are of the hard-wired variety. A good time for battery replacement is the day you change your clocks to daylight savings time, or on January 1. Any smoke detector over 10 years old should be replaced.

Develop an emergency evacuation plan. It is important to have an emergency evacuation plan at home, as well as at work. Discuss it with your entire family, and practice it. Fires catch people off-guard. Don't let one catch you or your family that way. It could be tragic.

How long has it been since you've tested your home smoke detectors, and changed batteries?