

Are Your Smoke Alarms Being Regularly Maintained?

A smoke alarm is one of your most important pieces of safety equipment. It is designed to detect smoke particles in the air, alert you to a fire in its earliest stages and give you a chance to get out of the house.

There are two types of detectors. Ionization, which responds better to flaming fire, is the more common type because it is less expensive. The second type, photoelectric, responds more quickly to smoldering fires. Consider having both types in your home.

More tips:

- An alarm with a dead or missing battery or one on a non-functioning circuit is worse than none at all – it gives a false sense of security
- To ensure proper operation, replace the batteries at least once a year, or when you hear intermittent beeping. Two times a year is even better ... how about on the day you change your clock to and from daylight savings time
- Don't use rechargeable batteries for smoke alarms – when they lose their charge they don't emit a warning signal
- Consider subscribing to an emergency alarm service
- While it may look better hidden in the corner of a room or to the side, place it where it can work most effectively. Smoke rises, so it's critical to attach alarms on or near the ceiling
- Install alarms on each level of your home (including the basement) in hallways adjacent to stairs or bedrooms
- Avoid placing smoke alarms near furnace rooms, kitchens and washrooms, where steam can accidentally activate them. The alarm could end up sounding so often that you could ignore it, or respond slowly, in an actual fire

Test your alarms monthly. If the alarm is battery-powered and doesn't sound, replace the battery and try again. If it's electrically operated and doesn't sound, check the fuse and try again. In either case, if the alarm still isn't working, replace the unit.

As part of your maintenance, clean out the alarm chamber and protective cover with the soft brush attachment on your vacuum every month or so. Keep smoke detectors clear of dust and never paint them. When alarms get plugged up with dirt and dust, they can become inoperable, even if the batteries are good.

Read the manufacturer's instructions for installation, maintenance, and testing information. And only use smoke alarms tested and approved by CSA or ULC.

For more information about auto or home insurance or for a free, no-obligation quote, call the CUMIS Insurance program today at **1-800-810-2847** to speak with one of our licensed insurance representatives.

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