

# SMOKE ALARMS

Smoke alarms are now required to be installed in new domestic dwellings and in many dwelling additions. A high percentage of deaths and injuries occur by fire in domestic dwellings, but there has never been a recorded death in South Australia where a home was protected by a functioning smoke alarm.

The installation of smoke alarms is a life saving initiative designed primarily to awaken sleeping people and give them adequate warning to evacuate in the event of a fire.

There are three main types of domestic smoke alarms:

- Alarms powered by a 9 Volt battery;
- Alarms powered by connection to your household mains power supply, usually with a 9 Volt battery back up power supply;
- Alarms powered by a 10 year life non replaceable, non-removable, permanently connected battery.

## **ALL NEW HOMES MUST HAVE SMOKE ALARMS INSTALLED.**

For houses built and occupied prior to February 1<sup>st</sup> 1998, the minimum requirement is an alarm powered by a 9 Volt battery.

From the 1<sup>st</sup> February 1998, if the land on which any covered by this legislation is built, undergoes a change of ownership (either before or after 1<sup>st</sup> January 2000), the new owner must, within 6 months of title transfer, install smoke alarm either:

- Hard wired to the 240 volt household power supply (unless the dwelling is not connected to such a supply); or Powered by 10 year life, non-replaceable, non removable, permanently connected battery

Since the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1995, smoke alarms have been required in all new homes in South Australia. These alarms must be hard wired to the 240 volt mains power supply, unless the dwelling is not connected to such a power supply. They should also be fitted with a battery to provide power in case of a supply failure. In dwelling not connected to mains power, the

Smoke alarms must comply with Australian Standard 3786, or be listed in the Scientific Services Laboratory (SSL) register of accredited products. Only those alarms

stamped with the Standards Australia mark, or listed in the SSL register are considered adequate in design, performance and testing.

## How many smoke alarms do I need?

The number of smoke alarms required in a building depends upon the design of the dwelling, including the number of storeys and layout of living and bedroom

areas. Generally, smoke alarms are required to be located in bedrooms or in areas separating the bedrooms from the remainder of the dwelling.

In two storey dwellings, at least one smoke alarm must be provided in each storey. It is recommended that where more than one alarm is installed, they be interconnected, so that both alarms will activate upon the detection of smoke.

## Where should I locate smoke alarms?

Smoke alarms are very sensitive and may detect smoke and moisture caused by household activities such as burnt toast or steam from a bathroom. To prevent false alarms, it is recommended that smoke alarms are not located near cooking appliances, in bathrooms or other damp or humid areas, or near hot water heaters, space heaters or fireplaces.

Smoke alarms should be mounted on or near the ceiling, and must be connected to the mains electrical power supply, with a 9 Volt battery back up.

## Other requirements

Special types of alarms are available and must be considered for specific needs, for example, people with a hearing impairment, where detection is required in cooking areas etc.

For smoke alarms to be effective they must be adequately maintained in accordance with the manufacturers recommendations, including cleaning, regular testing, and replacement of batteries.

The legislation applies to all homes including dwellings, home units, townhouses, flats etc.

The owner of a rental property is responsible for ensuring that smoke alarms are installed.

This advice provides owners with some useful procedures for the effective maintenance of self contained smoke alarms and must be considered in association with any other recommendations or instructions offered by the manufacturer of the smoke alarms.

## Want to know more?

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