



Roughly 70 percent of home fire deaths occur in homes with no smoke detectors or with smoke detectors that are not functioning properly. Smoke detectors are the great safety success story of the 20th century but they are only useful when they are working.

## Who should have smoke alarms?

Every home should have at least one smoke alarm. In the event of a fire, a smoke alarm can save lives. A properly installed and maintained smoke alarm will provide early warning to your family and give you time to escape.

## Where do I install my smoke alarms?

Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, including the basement. Since most fatal fires begin late at night or early in the morning when the occupants are sleeping you should always install smoke detectors directly outside all sleeping areas. For extra safety, install smoke alarms inside bedrooms.

Smoke alarms are not hard to install. In most cases, all you will need is a screwdriver. Follow the manufacturer's installation instructions. Since smoke and many deadly gasses rise, install your smoke alarms on the ceiling, or 6-8 inches from the ceiling on the wall.

## How do I keep them working?

There are three simple steps to remember when caring for your smoke alarms.

- Check the battery in your smoke detector once a month.
- Replace the battery at least once a year. The Bellevue Fire Department recommends that you change the battery in your smoke alarm when you change your clocks each fall.

- Keep your smoke detectors clean. Dust and debris can interfere with how smoke alarms work. Regularly vacuum your detector to keep it working right.

## What's Chirping?

The chirping noise lets you know that the battery in your smoke alarm needs to be replaced.

## What if the Alarm goes off while I am cooking?

Then it is doing its job. Do not disable your smoke alarm. You may not remember to put the batteries back in the alarm when you are finished cooking. Instead, clear the air by waving a towel near the alarm, leaving the batteries in place. If this happens frequently, you may want to move the smoke alarm to a new location.

## When do I need to Replace my Smoke Detectors?

Smoke detectors should function properly for ten years, but after that time they should be replaced. After ten years your smoke alarm will have been working for over 87,000 continuous hours. You may want to write the purchase date with a marker on the back of your smoke alarm. That way you will know when it should be replaced.

## What If I can't afford a smoke alarm?

The Bellevue fire department can provide and install smoke alarms in homes for senior citizens, disabled persons, and people who are living on a low income. If you meet these requirements and are in need of a smoke alarm please call the Bellevue Fire Department Community Liaison Officer at 425-452-6995 to make arrangements to have a smoke detector installed.

## **What if I rent?**

Your landlord is required by law (RCW 48.48.140) to provide you with a working smoke alarm at the time you move in.. Tenants are required to maintain the alarm in working order during the time that they occupy the dwelling.

## **For More Information Contact:**

Bellevue Fire Department  
Fire Prevention Division  
425-452-6872  
[www.bellevuewa.gov/fire](http://www.bellevuewa.gov/fire)