



**FIRE
RESCUE**

VICTORIA



**Only working
smoke alarms
save lives.**



**A working smoke alarm
provides early warning
and time to escape safely.**

Why should I have a smoke alarm?

When you're asleep you lose your sense of smell. A working smoke alarm will alert you if there is smoke from a fire.

A small fire can grow to involve an entire room in two to three minutes. A working smoke alarm provides early warning and time to escape safely.

Smoke alarms are compulsory in every home.

By law, all residential properties must have working smoke alarms complying with Australian Standards AS 3786.

- Residential homes constructed after 1 August 1997, or homes which have undergone a major renovation or extension, must have smoke alarms connected to 240-volt mains power with battery backup.
- Residential homes constructed before 1 August 1997 may have battery-operated smoke alarms.
- Residential homes constructed after 1 May 2014, or homes which have undergone a major renovation or extension, must have smoke alarms interconnected (if there is a requirement for more than one smoke alarm).

Your building surveyor should indicate the location and number of smoke alarms required on the plans for your new home or building works.

Smoke alarm facts



If you don't have a working smoke alarm installed in your home and a fire occurs:



You are more likely to incur property loss and damage.



You are more likely to suffer serious injury or death.

All smoke alarms:



Contain a battery.



Need to be tested monthly.



Need to be cleaned annually.



Need to be replaced after 10 years.

Smoke alarms must be installed in:



All residential buildings where people sleep

(houses, units, flats and townhouses).



Buildings used for short term accommodation

(boarding house, guest house, hostel, bed and breakfast accommodation, cabins in caravan parks, tourist parks, holiday resorts, and similar tourist accommodation).

Victorian fire and rescue services recommend smoke alarms connected to 240-volt mains power with a battery backup or alarms powered by a 10 year long-life battery. When more than one smoke alarm is installed, they should be interconnected so that when any alarm activates, all smoke alarms will sound.

Types of smoke alarms

Photoelectric

Predominantly detect visible smoke including large particles present in smouldering type fires.

Dual sensor

These have the combined features of a photoelectric and ionisation smoke alarms. These devices have been shown to perform more consistently across a range of fire conditions.

Ionisation

Predominantly detect the presence of extremely small particles of smoke. These particles are usually present in fast-flaming fires.

Which type of smoke alarm is best?

A working smoke alarm is your first line of defence in the event of a fire.

The number, location and interconnection of working alarms are more important than the type of smoke alarm installed.

Models of smoke alarms

Powered by a 9-volt battery

Battery requires annual replacement.

Powered by a 10 year long-life battery

Battery lasts for the life span of the smoke alarm.

240-volt mains powered with 9-volt replaceable battery backup

Battery requires annual replacement.

240-volt mains powered with 10 year long life battery backup

Battery lasts for the life span of the smoke alarm.

Mains powered smoke alarms have a green LED light to indicate that mains power is connected. If the green light is not lit it could mean that there is an issue with the smoke alarm or the dwelling's wiring connected to the smoke alarm, and the alarm or wiring may need to be repaired.



Remember!

All smoke alarms have a life span of 10 years

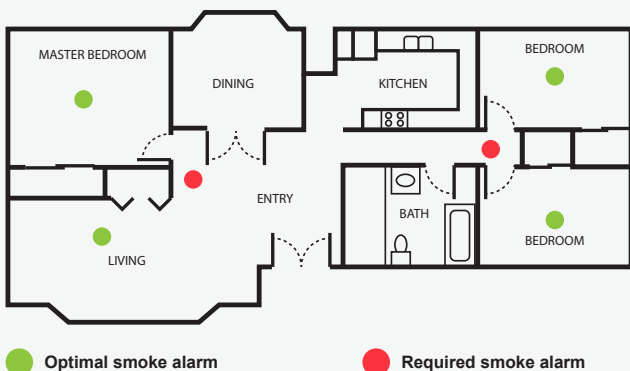
Placement of smoke alarms

It's important to have working smoke alarms throughout your home, and to ensure all smoke alarms are installed correctly. Smoke alarms must be:

- 1 Installed outside each sleeping area; and
- 2 Installed on each storey in a multi-storey home, located in the path that people will use to evacuate.

Victorian fire services also recommend smoke alarms be installed inside all bedrooms.

Installing your smoke alarm

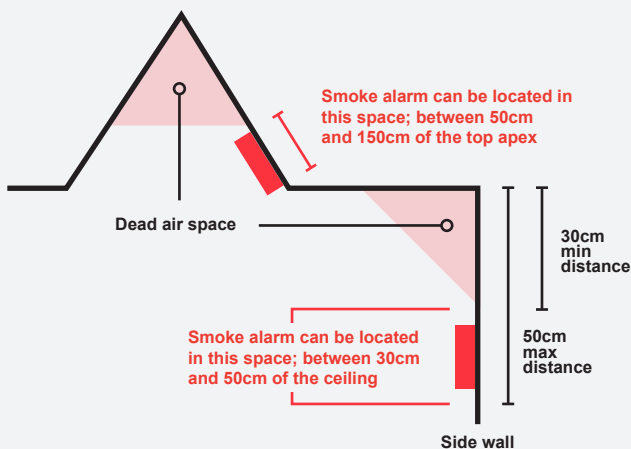


For optimum smoke detection, it is recommended that each smoke alarm is placed on the ceiling, close to the centre of the room, and at least 30cm away from the wall. Keep away from what is known as dead air space where walls and ceilings meet. Smoke alarms may not operate in these areas.

If a smoke alarm cannot be installed on the ceiling it can be placed on a wall as long as it is no more than 50cm from the ceiling and outside the dead air space (30cm from the ceiling).

For houses with cathedral ceilings, refer to the diagram overleaf.

House with cathedral ceilings (not to scale)



Consideration should also be given to the effect on smoke alarm performance from air conditioners, heaters, fans, air vents and other temperature control devices. Smoke alarms should be located where these devices will not compromise the effectiveness of the smoke alarm.

Most residential fires start in the kitchen. High ceilings or the layout of your home may delay the time it takes for your smoke alarm to operate. Consider installing an additional smoke alarm closer to the kitchen area and interconnecting it to all smoke alarms in the home.

Smoke alarms should not be located in kitchens and bathrooms.

The Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Council (AFAC) recommends smoke alarms be replaced with interconnected alarms in all sleeping areas, living spaces, paths of travel (hallways, stairways) and garages if they are under the home's main roof.

Smoke alarms powered by 240-volt mains must be interconnected by an electrician.

Battery operated, including long life battery alarms, can be interconnected by purchasing interconnected wireless smoke alarms. Electricians are not required to install these smoke alarms.

Testing and maintenance of smoke alarms



Test monthly

Test your smoke alarm batteries every month by pressing and holding the test button. Hold until the alarm beeps three times. If you can't reach the smoke alarm, use a broom handle to press the test button.



Dust annually

Dust or gently vacuum around your smoke alarm to clear away dust and other particles and to avoid false alarms.



Change battery annually

If your smoke alarm has a removable battery, change it each year at the end of daylight saving or a date easily remembered.



Replace every 10 years

All smoke alarms need to be replaced every 10 years and should be replaced with a 10 year long-life lithium battery smoke alarm.

The manufacture / build date is usually on a sticker on the side or on the back of the smoke alarm.

Rental Properties

Residential rental providers are responsible for fitting smoke alarms in rented properties.¹

Victoria's Residential Tenancies Act, Section 68 (1), states "A residential rental provider must ensure that rented premises are provided and maintained in good repair." A landlord must repair or replace a non-functioning smoke alarm once notified by the tenant.²

It is the responsibility of renters to test the smoke alarm each month and it is the responsibility of the landlord or owner to clean the smoke alarm and replace the battery annually (if applicable).³

1 Consumer Affairs Victoria, *Renting a home: A guide for tenants*, p. 20, 32

2 *Residential Tenancies Amendment Act 2018*

3 Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council, *Smoke Alarms in Residential Accommodation*, 2018, p. 4

Residents of public housing

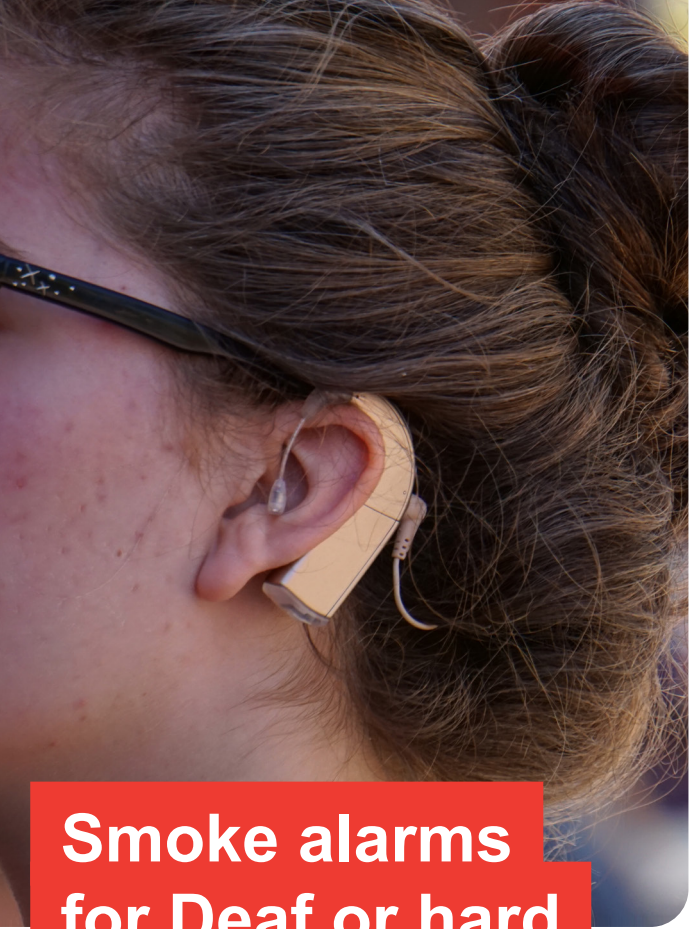
If you live in public housing, your smoke alarm is powered by mains power, with a non-removable 10 year lithium battery backup.

You cannot change the battery in your smoke alarm.

It is your responsibility to:

- Test your smoke alarm monthly.
- Contact your housing officer on 13 11 72 if the smoke alarm is not working.
- Contact your housing officer to report any faults or if the smoke alarm starts to chirp or beep for no reason, as this may indicate a flat battery or fault with the unit.





Smoke alarms for Deaf or hard of hearing

Smoke alarms for people who are deaf or hard of hearing should use at least two alternative alarm methods including tones of varying frequency vibrating pads or strobe lights. Financial assistance through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) funding may be available to purchase this type of alarm.

If you're not eligible for NDIS support, the Victorian Government may provide financial assistance through the Smoke Alarm Subsidy. For more information contact Expression Australia at [expression.com.au](https://www.expression.com.au).



Smoke alarms for older people and people with a disability

Smoke alarms installed in accommodation occupied by older people and people with a disability should be connected to a personal alarm system. When activated, the smoke alarm should also send an automated alert to the personal alarm monitoring company to enable follow up according to prearranged procedures.



Remember!

A variety of alarm types helps increase your chances of survival.

Frequently asked questions

Why should I test my smoke alarm?

A working smoke alarm is your first line of defence in the event of a fire. You should test your smoke alarm regularly to ensure the battery is not flat and that the alarm will sound when you need it most.

Why does my smoke alarm beep once every 60 seconds or intermittently?

This could mean that the battery is going flat and needs replacing.



Note: Replace the entire smoke alarm if it still beeps after installing a new battery.

Why do 240-volt smoke alarms have a battery?

240-volt smoke alarms connected to mains power are required to have a battery to provide back-up power in the event of a power outage.

What can I do if my smoke alarm operates every time I make toast or have a shower?

Do not remove the battery. A primary reason why smoke alarms do not operate when needed is because batteries have been removed after repeated false alarms. What you should do is:

- Check the type of smoke alarm installed – if it is an ionisation type, consider replacing it with a photoelectric type smoke alarm.

- Consider installing an exhaust fan in the kitchen or bathroom.
- Consider relocating the smoke alarm away from the kitchen or bathroom.

Will I hear my smoke alarm if I am affected by alcohol, drugs or other medication?

You may not hear the alarm, therefore consider interconnecting your smoke alarms so other people in the house can wake you.

How long does a smoke alarm last?

All smoke alarms, even those connected to 240-volt mains power have a 10 year life span. After this time they should be replaced. The date of manufacture is indicated on the alarm.

What do I do with my old smoke alarm?

Domestic smoke alarms can be disposed in normal household rubbish. Domestic smoke alarms are not included in the e-waste requirements effective as of 1 July 2019. Disposing of smoke alarms in normal domestic rubbish does not contravene the e-waste disposal requirements. They should not be crushed, shredded or dismantled in anyway as some contain a small amount of radioactive material.

Where can I purchase smoke alarms?

Compliant models can be found at most hardware stores, electrical retailers, department stores, supermarkets and fire protection companies. Only purchase smoke alarms that comply to Australian Standards AS 3786, indicated by the Standards Australia 'five ticks' symbols on the smoke alarm or packaging.



Australian
Standard



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