

Fire Safety Tips

Yes or No? Do You . . .

- have working smoke detectors installed in your home? LFD recommends a smoke detector on every level, in every bedroom, and in the halls outside of sleeping areas.
- keep your stovetop, hood above the stove, and oven grease-free?
- turn off the stove when you leave?
- keep potholders, towels, and other materials that could burn away from the stove?
- keep matches and lighters out of the reach of children?
- keep all your electrical cords in good repair? Warm cords and tripped circuit breakers may indicate overloaded circuits, which can cause fires.
- have no more than two appliances plugged in to any outlet or any one extension cord?
- keep space heaters at least three feet away from walls, newspapers, clothing, and other materials that could burn?
- keep water heater and furnace closets free of newspapers, supplies and storage material?
- have gasoline and other flammable liquids safely stored away from ignition sources such as the water heater?
- have your house number visible from the street?
- have all windows and doors needed for escape in good repair?
- have escape releases on any burglar bars?
- clean the dryer lint trap after every use?
- have large, deep ashtrays to prevent smoking materials from falling out?
- completely extinguish smoking materials before going to bed or leaving home?

TEST YOUR SMOKE DETECTORS FOR LIFE!

Death by Fire: Nearly 4,000 Americans die every year in residential fires. Most of these deaths are not from heat or flames but from inhaling smoke and toxic fumes. Smoke is actually the particles of combustion generated by what is burning (e.g., paper, wood, chemicals, plastic, upholstery, or other fuels).

Buying Time: When a smoke detector senses smoke, an alarm automatically sounds. Most fatal home fires occur between 8 p.m. and 8 a.m. Fires often generate lethal amounts of unseen smoke and fumes well before flames are visible and before heat makes residents feel uncomfortably warm. As a result, many people who die in home fires are asleep and never wake up. When carefully purchased, installed, and maintained, smoke detectors can prevent such needless deaths. Smoke detectors buy time to get out of the house quickly before toxic fumes accumulate to lethal levels.

Purchasing: Quality, not price, should be the determining factor when buying smoke detectors. Check for the following:

- Laboratory label, insuring that samples of the model you are buying was carefully tested.
- Alarm loud enough to awaken the family through closed bedroom doors.
- Malfunction signal, to warn you when batteries are weak or dead.
- Manufacturer's warranty of at least five years.
- Ease in maintenance and cleaning.

Which type?

IONIZATION: Contains a small amount of radioactivity that conducts electricity. Electric current flows continuously between two electrodes in the chamber. When smoke particles enter, they disturb the flow, causing the alarm to go off.

PHOTOELECTRIC: Contains a beam of light and a photocell within the chamber. When smoke enters, it deflects the beam, causing it to strike the photocell and set off the alarm.

Which is Better?

Ionization detectors are more sensitive to the tiny particles of combustion that can't be seen or smelled, those emitted by flaming fires. Photoelectric detectors are more sensitive to the large particles of combustion emitted by smoldering fires.

The differences between the two types are generally not critical, since the difference in response time is only a matter of seconds. Since most home fires produce a rich mixture of smoke types, with detectable amounts of both large-particle and small-particle smoke early in the fire's growth, either an ionization or a photoelectric detector will meet most needs.

Placement:

- Buy as many smoke detectors as it takes to give your home complete coverage. You obviously increase your chances of survival with each detector that you have, but one on each level of the house is the absolute minimum.
- You should have a smoke detector in each bedroom, in the hallway close to each sleeping area and in heavily occupied areas like the living room.
- When bedroom doors are left open, you should have at least one detector in the hallway outside the bedroom area.

Installation:

- Follow the manufacturer's installation instructions.
- On the ceilings, mount the device away from corners and walls, which have dead air space nearby. About eight to 10 inches is the recommended distance.
- On walls, install the detectors high, because smoke rises, and place them eight to 10 inches away from corners and ceilings.
- Install smoke detectors at least three feet from vents, which might re-circulate the smoke.

- Never place smoke detectors on un-insulated walls or ceilings. Extreme temperatures can ruin batteries and prevent smoke from reaching the detectors.

Exit Drills in the Home

Smoke detectors provide an early warning system to allow you and your family extra time to get out of the house fast during a fire.

If the alarm sounds be sure each family member knows what the alarm sounds like and what to do. Families should regularly practice Operation EDITH - Exit Drills In The Home. This means having a prepared escape plan, with two possible escape routes from every room, and a prearranged meeting place outside the house. Families should actually run through a fire drill at least twice a year.

Maintenance Check List

- Test your smoke detector at least once a month by pressing the test button.
- Replace weak or worn-out batteries at once.
- Never borrow smoke detector batteries for other uses.
- Keep extra batteries on hand.
- Change batteries at least twice a year.
- Dust and vacuum smoke detectors at least twice a year.
- Make sure smoke detectors are working when you return home after an extended absence.

Kitchen

- All electrical appliances and tools should have a testing agency label.
- Have appliances repaired if they aren't working right.
- Don't overload the outlets.
- Water and electricity combined cause shock. Have dry hands; don't stand in water. If an appliance gets wet, have it serviced.

Don't store things over the stove. People get burned reaching. Turn pot handles so children can't pull them down. Wear tight sleeves when you cook. Loose-fitting garments can catch fire.

Living or Family Room

- Use large ashtrays.
- Before you go to bed, look under cushions for burning cigarettes.
- Use a metal fireplace screen. Have the chimney checked and cleaned regularly.
- Put lighters and matches where small children won't find them. Use special outlet covers to keep children's fingers out.
- Allow air space around the TV and stereo to prevent overheating. If the TV doesn't work right, it can be a fire danger. Have it checked out.
- Keep portable heaters away from people and combustibles.

Bedroom

- Buy a smoke detector and install it outside your sleeping area.
- Plan two escapes from each bedroom.
- Don't smoke bed.
- Don't overload electrical outlets.

Basement, Garage, and Storage

- Store gasoline and other flammables in tight metal containers. Don't use flammable liquids near heat, a pilot light, or while smoking.
- Have heating equipment checked yearly.
- Clean up your workbench. Keep flammables away from sparks.
- If a fuse blows, find the cause. (Replace a fuse with one of the correct size.)
Sort and remove rubbish. Don't store things near the furnace or heater.

What to Do if You Have a Fire.

- Get out immediately! Do not try and grab your possessions, they can be replaced, you can't.
- Have a predetermined place to meet all the occupants of the residence so everyone can be accounted for.
- Call the Fire Department, Don't assume some one else has.
- Give any information you can to the fire department regarding the location of the fire and what is burning.