

## SMOKE ALARM REQUIREMENTS

Photoelectric-only type of smoke alarms are required to be installed in the vicinity of any bedrooms and on each level of a dwelling, for all new dwellings and dwellings that are sold or transferred, beginning January 1, 2009.

The law allows the use of photoelectric and carbon monoxide combination alarms but it does not allow ionization /photoelectric combination alarms to be used for these specific locations.

Ionization smoke alarms are permitted to be used in supplemental locations for additional protection. Smoke alarms save lives, prevent injuries, and minimize property damage by alerting people to a fire when a fire is still small. Smoke alarms need to be properly installed, maintained and replaced when needed.

## CARBON MONOXIDE (CO) ALARM REQUIREMENTS

CO alarms are required to be installed in the vicinity of any bedrooms for all new dwellings and dwellings that are sold or transferred, beginning July 1, 2005.

Heating appliances that are not working properly are the major cause of unintentional carbon monoxide poisoning in Vermont. Other common sources include emergency generators or space heaters and motor vehicles left running in attached garages.

It is very important to be aware of the early signs of CO poisoning. Exposure to CO can mimic flu systems - headaches, dizziness, disorientation, nausea and fatigue. Higher levels of exposure will result in disorientation and drowsiness, leading to unconsciousness and death. Often the symptoms will be less when the person exposed to carbon monoxide leaves the building, only to have the symptoms reoccur when the person re-enters the building.

## POWER SUPPLY FOR ALARMS

Smoke alarms installed in a dwelling constructed after **January 1, 1994** and carbon monoxide alarms installed in a dwelling constructed after **July 1, 2005** must be directly wired to the building electrical service and have a battery back up.

Alarms that are hard-wired into the home electrical system should be installed by a qualified electrician.

## INSTALLATION INFORMATION

Choose smoke and carbon monoxide alarms that bear the label of Underwriters Laboratories or another nationally recognized testing laboratory.

Read and follow the manufacturers' instructions that are supplied with each alarm.

Install photoelectric-only smoke alarms in the vicinity of any bedrooms and on each level of a dwelling including the basement.

Install smoke alarms in each bedroom for additional protection and interconnect smoke alarms together so if one sounds an alarm, they all sound an alarm, to make sure the alarm is heard.

Mount smoke alarms on flat ceilings no closer than 4" from the adjoining wall surface. Mount smoke alarms on walls no closer than 4", and not further than 12", from the adjoining ceiling surface. Do not install a smoke alarm within 36" of a ceiling suspended fan, a supply register or the door to the bathroom or kitchen.

## ALARM MAINTENANCE

Clean alarms monthly by gently vacuuming to remove dust and cobwebs to allow proper air flow through all vents.

Install a new battery in all alarms that require changing the battery at least once a year. Immediately install a new battery if an alarm "chirps," warning the battery is low.

Smoke and CO alarms don't last forever. Replace smoke alarms when they are 10 years old and carbon monoxide alarms when indicated in the manufacturer's instructions, or when indicated by a trouble alarm on the unit.

Test alarms each month, as indicated by the manufacturer's instructions.

## OTHER FIRE SAFETY TIPS

**Follow these simple safety rules to prevent hazardous situations in the home:**

- 1) Use smoking materials properly. Never smoke in bed.
- 2) Keep matches or lighters away from children.
- 3) Store flammable materials in proper containers.
- 4) Keep electrical appliances in good condition and don't overload extension cords or electrical circuits.
- 5) Keep stoves, barbecue grills, fireplaces and chimneys grease- and debris-free.
- 6) Never leave anything cooking on the stove unattended.
- 7) Keep open flames, like candles, away from flammable materials.
- 8) Don't let rubbish accumulate.
- 9) Keep at least one working fire extinguisher on every floor.
- 10) Have an escape plan and make sure all family members know it.
- 11) Use generators or other fuel-powered machines outside the home. CO fumes are odorless and can quickly overwhelm you.
- 12) Inspect home heating equipment yearly and maintain them in good working order according to the manufacturer's instructions.



Vermont Department of Public Safety

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