

# Facts about smoke alarms

## Install Smoke Alarms: It's the Law!

*The Ontario Fire Code requires that every home have working smoke alarms on each storey as well as outside all sleeping areas.*

### 1 Smoke alarms save lives

Most fatal fires occur at night when people are asleep. Often, victims never wake up. A working smoke alarm will detect smoke and sound an alarm, giving everyone precious time to escape.

### 2 Buying the right alarm

There are several types of smoke alarms with different features and applications. Alarms can be electrically connected, battery powered or a combination of both. Many alarms have a pause feature, which temporarily silences the alarm. For information about the best type of alarm for your home, contact your fire department.

### 3 Where to install smoke alarms

Smoke alarms must be installed on each storey of the home as well as outside sleeping areas. Because smoke rises, alarms should be installed on the ceiling. If this is not possible, place them high up on a wall, according to manufacturer's instructions. Avoid placing alarms near bathrooms, heating appliances, windows, or close to ceiling fans.

### 4 Test smoke alarms monthly

Every month, test your smoke alarms, using the alarm test button.



Install alarms on every storey



Test smoke alarms monthly



Heed the advice and save lives

### 5 Change the batteries once a year

If the low battery warning sounds, replace the battery immediately. Install a new battery of the proper type once a year, or as recommended by the manufacturer.

### 6 Gently vacuum annually

Dust can clog a smoke alarm, so carefully vacuum the inside of a battery powered unit using the soft bristle brush. If electrically connected, shut off the power and vacuum the outside vents only. Restore power and test the unit when finished.

### 7 Smoke alarms don't last forever

All smoke alarms do wear out, so if your alarms are more than 10 years old, replace them with new ones.

### 8 Plan your escape

Make sure that everyone knows the sound of the smoke alarm and what to do when it activates. Create an escape plan and practice it with the entire household. Once outside, call the fire department from a neighbour's home. Never re-enter a burning building.

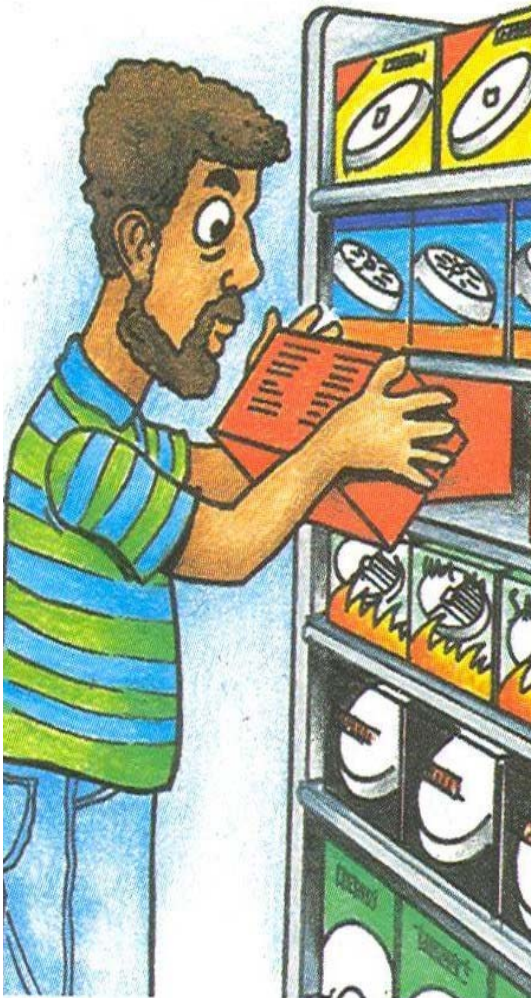
# Managing Nuisance Alarms



A *nuisance alarm* is when a smoke alarm accidentally activates, generally due to cooking activities or steam from the shower. In some homes, depending on how close the alarm is to the bathroom or kitchen, nuisance alarms are more than an occasional annoyance. Unfortunately, people often respond to nuisance alarms by removing the battery from the alarm or shutting off the breaker. This is a very bad idea. Not only is it against the law, it may leave your home and your family at serious risk if a fire occurs. Fortunately, there are some very effective ways to address the problem of nuisance alarms. Follow the suggestions below until you find the ones that work for you.

## Tips to combat the problem

The most common cause of nuisance alarms is cooking. Therefore, the first step is to minimize the problem at the source by keeping ovens and burners clean, and by turning down the timer setting on toasters. Using the fan on the range hood when cooking can also help to remove combustion particles from the air. If this fails to produce desired results, there are other solutions to consider.



**Shop smart:** Find out what type of alarms suit your needs and the best areas of your home to install them to conquer nuisance alarms forever.

### Install smoke alarms with a pause feature

For anyone experiencing nuisance alarms, a smoke alarm with a "pause" or "hush" feature is a must. These alarms have a button which, when pressed, silences the unit for several minutes. The alarm will then re-set itself automatically. It is highly recommended that any new smoke alarms purchased include this feature.

### Move the alarm

Sometimes the solution to frequent nuisance alarms is as simple as moving the alarm to a different location. If at all possible, avoid having a smoke alarm in the cooking area. Moving an alarm from the kitchen to the hallway could solve your problem. Another option is to move the alarm from the ceiling to the wall. The alarm should be installed no more than 30 cm. (12 inches) from the ceiling and should be located away from corners.

### Try Alternative Technology

Smoke alarms commonly use one of two technologies to detect smoke: ionization or photoelectric. By understanding how each works you can make a more informed decision as to what suits your needs.

- *Ionization-type smoke alarms* have a small amount of radioactive material that ionizes the air between two electrically charged plates, causing a measurable current to flow between the plates. When smoke enters the chamber, it disrupts the flow of current, which activates the alarm. Ionization alarms respond slightly faster to flaming-type fires.
- *Photoelectric-type alarms* work by aiming a light source into a sensing chamber at an angle away from the sensor. Smoke entering the chamber reflects light onto the sensor which triggers the alarm. Photoelectric alarms respond slightly faster to smoldering-type fires.

**Note:** As most cooking fires tend to be of the fast, flaming type, it is generally recommended that any alarms installed near the kitchen be of the photoelectric-type.

In 43 per cent of preventable\* home fire situations there was no smoke alarm warning.

\*A preventable fire is any fire that was not intentionally set.