
City of Rancho Mirage Fire Department

SMOKE ALARMS

Having working smoke alarms in your home can mean the difference between life and death, but only if these life-saving devices are installed correctly and working properly.

Smoke alarms should be installed on every level of your home, including the basement, making sure that there is an alarm outside every separate sleeping area. New homes are required to have a smoke alarm in every sleeping room and all smoke alarms must be interconnected. Hard-wired smoke alarms that operate on your household electrical current can be interconnected so that every alarm sounds regardless of the fire's location.

Alarms that are hard-wired should have battery backups in case of a power outage and should be installed by a qualified electrician. If someone in your home is deaf or hard of hearing, consider installing an alarm that combines flashing lights, vibration and/ or sound. Because smoke rises, mount smoke alarms high on walls or ceilings, but not near windows, doors, or ducts where drafts might interfere with their operation. Ceiling mounted alarms should be installed at least four inches away from the nearest wall. Wall-mounted alarms should be installed four to 12 inches away from the ceiling. If you have ceilings that are pitched, install the alarm near the ceiling's

highest point. If your smoke alarm sounds "nuisance alarms," try relocating it farther from kitchens or bathrooms, where cooking fumes and steam can cause the alarm to sound.

Test your smoke alarms once a month, following the manufacturer's instructions. Replace batteries once a year or as soon as the smoke alarm "chirps," warning that the battery is low. A good reminder is to schedule battery replacements for the same time you change your clocks for daylight savings time. Never paint or affix stickers to smoke alarms as this could keep the alarms from working. Replace your smoke alarms every 10 years. If you can't remember how old the alarm is, then it's probably time for a new one. Consider installing smoke alarms with "long-life" (10-year) batteries.

And finally, plan regular fire drills to ensure that everyone knows exactly what to do when the smoke alarm sounds. Hold a drill at night to make sure that sleeping family members awaken at the sound of the alarm. Some studies have shown that some children may not awaken to the sound of the smoke alarm. Know what your child will do before a fire occurs.
