

SMOKE DETECTORS

When purchasing smoke detectors, be sure to buy as many as you need to give your home proper coverage. Your chances of surviving a fire in your home increase with every added detector.

Draw a quick floor plan of your house and consider the needs of each area. At the very minimum, there should be a smoke detector within ten feet of every sleeping area and at least one on every level of the home, including the basement. It is now recommended that there be a smoke detector inside each bedroom because of increased use of electrical appliances like televisions and computers in these rooms and in the hallway adjacent to each bedroom.

Occupants should sleep with their bedroom doors closed at night to help prevent the spread of fires and the toxic fumes they emit. This requires that smoke detectors be installed both inside and outside of these bedrooms and that occupants be able to hear hall alarms from behind closed doors.

It is also advisable to have smoke detectors in high-traffic areas such as living rooms or dens. In multi-level homes, place a detector at the top of the stairs or stairwell and in other areas where smoke travels quickly. Basement detectors should be placed close to the stairway leading to the floor above, but not at the top where dead air space near the door may prevent smoke from reaching the detector.

There are certain rooms in a home for which smoke detectors are not recommended. They should be installed near but not in the kitchen, for example, where normal cooking may set off the alarm. Smoke detectors are also not recommended for bathrooms, attics, garages, or other areas where steam or car exhaust may trigger an alarm. Heat alarms may be used in these areas, although they have a much slower reaction time than smoke detectors so their use should be limited. You may also choose to use a detector with a temporary shut-off button near these areas. Never remove a detector's battery to end a false alarm.