

Smoke Alarms Fact Sheet

For Nominated Third Party & Homestay Providers

A guide to appropriate location, testing and maintenance.

It is the Nominated Third Party / Homestay provider's responsibility to ensure that smoke alarms in the home are positioned correctly, tested regularly and maintained to a standard that aligns with the guidelines below and those provided by the manufacturer of your alarm of choice

The information below comes from the MFB website (<http://www.mfb.vic.gov.au/Community-Safety/Home-Fire-Safety/Smoke-Alarms.html>) and must be adhered to by all Nominated Third Party and/or Homestay Providers.

Smoke Alarms - Only working smoke alarms save lives

Why should I have a smoke alarm?

If you don't have a working smoke alarm installed in your home, and a fire occurs:

- You are 57 per cent more likely to suffer property loss and damage
- You are 26 per cent more likely to suffer serious injuries
- You are four times more likely to die

When you're asleep you lose your sense of smell. A smoke alarm is your electronic nose. It will alert you if there is smoke from a fire. A small fire can grow to involve an entire room in two to three minutes. A smoke alarm provides early warning and time to escape.



Smoke alarms are compulsory in every home.

Since 1 August 1997, Victorian law states that smoke alarms (complying with Australian standards AS 3786) must be installed in all homes, units, flats and townhouses. It is the legal responsibility of all owners and landlords to install working smoke alarms.

Residential homes constructed before 1st August 1997 need only 9 volt battery powered smoke alarms installed. Residential homes constructed after 1st August 1997 must have smoke alarms connected to 240 volt mains power. In addition a backup battery must be installed in the smoke alarm.

All fire services in Australia recommend photo-electric smoke alarms when installing or replacing existing smoke alarms. Smoke alarms need to be maintained in accordance with the manufacturers specifications.

All smoke alarms:

- Must contain a battery
- Need to be tested regularly
- Need to be replaced after 10 years

Locating a smoke alarm

- Smoke alarms must be located between each bedroom area and the rest of the house.
- In addition inside any bedroom where someone sleeps with the door shut
- In a two (or more) storey home a smoke alarm is required on every storey, located in the path that people will use to evacuate

Note: Cooking fires are common. High ceilings or the layout of your house may increase the time it takes for your smoke alarm to operate. Consider installing a photo-electric smoke alarm closer to the kitchen area.

Testing and Maintenance

Smoke alarms should be tested regularly:

- **Monthly:** Test by pressing the test button with a broom handle
- **Yearly:** Vacuum around your smoke alarm vents
- **Yearly:** Replace your 9 volt battery each year at the end of daylight saving

Remember: all smoke alarms need to be replaced after 10 years. When replacing an existing nine volt battery smoke alarm consider installing a photoelectric smoke alarm with an inbuilt ten year lithium battery. This will eliminate the need to change the battery every year.

The MFB's campaign at the end of daylight saving each year reminds people to:

"Change your clock; change your smoke alarm battery"

Information for renters

If the Residential Tenancy Act 1997 (RTA) applies to residential premises, the landlord is not only responsible for the installation of a smoke alarm but also its ongoing maintenance as per section 68(1) of the RTA Landlord's duty to maintain premises:

"A landlord must ensure that the rented premises including fixtures and fittings provided by the landlord at the rented premises are maintained in good repair."

It is the **tenant's** responsibility to:

- Test the smoke alarm every month to make sure it is working
- Contact their agent/Landlord if the smoke alarm is not working
- Contact their agent/landlord if the smoke alarm omits an occasional chirping noise as the battery or smoke alarm is faulty

Smoke alarm subsidy for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

A specialised smoke alarm is available for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Due to the cost of this type of smoke alarm, the Department of Human Services provides assistance via a subsidy.

For more information go to [Vicdeaf Smoke Alarm Subsidy](#)

For further general information please contact the Community Resilience Department on (03) 9665 4464 or commres@mfb.vic.gov.au