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Keep Safe With Smoke Alarms

How can you keep your family safe from the tragedy of a home fire? Use common sense when lighting candles or using tobacco products. Make sure space heaters are in good working order and not near any flammable objects. Have a fire escape plan and discuss it regularly with your household. And finally, make sure you have correctly installed and maintained smoke alarms.

Smoke alarm systems are an early-warning system to protect your family. They should be installed on every level of your home, including the basement and in all sleeping areas in accordance with manufacturers' instructions and applicable building codes and ordinances.

You can buy smoke alarms in hardware or home supply stores, or even over the internet. If a smoking cooking pot or a fireplace causes your smoke alarms to go off accidentally, wave the smoke away to get it to stop sounding — but never disable your smoke alarm.

Check your smoke alarm batteries once a month to see if they're still working. Replace the batteries once a year, and replace your smoke alarms once every eight to 10 years. You should also vacuum your smoke alarms periodically to keep them dirt- and dust-free. More information is available at the Environmental Protection Agency Web site, and the Consumer Product Safety Commission has many helpful ideas for staying safe.

Smoke alarm technology is always changing and improving, with new versions featuring wireless technology and alternate signal noises that are easier for children and for seniors to hear.

While fire prevention experts all agree that every home should have a working smoke alarm system, not every home does. A study from the University of Iowa found that older homes with multiple levels, like basements and second stories, or that were cluttered or poorly cleaned were significantly less likely to be fully protected with appropriate smoke alarms. The study shows that consumers need more information about the installation and maintenance of a smoke alarm system.

A study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association found that public health strategies to reduce residential fire-related injuries and deaths that include smoke alarm installation, monthly testing of smoke alarms, reduction of residential fire hazards, design and practice of fire escape plans, fire safety education, and implementation of smoke alarm ordinances achieve continued declines in residential fire-related deaths.

Visit smokealarmswork.org to find out more on how to prevent the tragedy of a house fire



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