

Install.



Inspect.



Protect.



Smoke Alarms Save Lives.



The United States Fire Administration

State-by-State Residential Smoke Alarm Requirements



FEMA

Wisconsin Department of Commerce

<http://www.commerce.state.wi.us/SB/SB-FirePreventionProgram.html>

Regulations/Standards

Wisconsin law requires owner-occupied homes, rental homes and other residential buildings to be protected by smoke alarms or a smoke detection system. Owners must install and maintain them, and tenants must inform the owner of any smoke alarm problems. The requirements differ between those for one and 2-family dwellings and those for multi-unit housing, which includes hotels and motels and apartment buildings. The requirements also differ for buildings depending on the date a building permit or state plan approval was applied for. In addition, there may be local or special occupancy requirements, such as for community-based residential facilities (CBRFs), hospitals and nursing homes. For more details, consult the applicable statutes (Ch. 101) and codes (Comm 21, 28, 61 to 65) and your local building inspection or fire department.

Why are smoke alarms necessary?

People in Wisconsin die because of not being warned of fires that they cannot see. Working smoke alarms have been shown to reduce by half the risk of death by fire. Most fire deaths are caused by smoke inhalation, not by burns. Hundreds of Wisconsinites are seriously and painfully injured each year. Also, smoke alarms protect property by providing early warning for the need to call help.

Installation

General guidelines for smoke alarm placement:

Where must smoke alarms be installed?

For one- and 2-family dwellings built before December 1, 1994, owners must install at least one smoke alarm on each floor level of each unit, including the basement. For multi-unit housing built before April 1, 2000, the owner must install at least one smoke alarm in the following locations:

- In the basement.
- At the head of stairs at each floor level. (If the stairs are enclosed, then place the smoke alarm in front of the door leading to the stairs.)
- Either in each sleeping room or elsewhere in the unit within 6 feet of each sleeping area, provided the location is not in a kitchen. After the above dates, additional locations may be required. (See table on back.) Although not always required, the following are recommended:

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- Place smoke alarms between each sleeping area and the rest of the dwelling, and above the base of any stairs on other floor levels within a dwelling.
- Locate a smoke alarm outside each sleeping area and inside each bedroom, and keep the bedroom doors closed for additional protection.

How should smoke alarms be installed?

Install smoke alarms according to manufacturers' instructions. Typical requirements include:

- Mount on the bottom of any exposed basement ceiling joists.
- Place at least 4 inches from the wall when installing on the ceiling. The center of the room is best. **(See illustration below.)**
- Place between 4 to 12 inches from the ceiling when installing on a wall. Be sure it is out of the dead air space where the ceiling and wall meet. (See illustration below.)
- Install within 3 feet of the highest part of a peaked or sloped ceiling.
- Place at least 3 feet away from any window, door or air register where drafts could prevent smoke from reaching the alarm.
- Mount away from kitchens where cooking could cause false alarms and subsequent disconnection.
- Do not install where there are extreme temperatures, excess humidity or heavy dust such as in bathrooms, unheated garages or attics. It is recommended that tamper-resistant smoke alarms or smoke alarms wired to the building electrical system be installed if there is a problem with battery disconnection. In older manufactured homes, mount smoke alarms only on interior walls and not on ceilings or exterior walls.

What maintenance is required?

Smoke alarms cannot save lives if they are not working!

- Change batteries at least once a year, or more often, if the low-battery warning activates. A good idea is to choose the same day or week each year to replace batteries. Mark the battery with the installation date. (There are smoke alarms with 10-year batteries available.)
- Change photo-electric bulbs when trouble indicators activate.
- Test the alarm monthly by using the test button, or as required by the manufacturer. If the alarm doesn't work, replace any battery. If it still doesn't work, replace the smoke alarm.

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- Open the cover and vacuum the unit regularly.
- Replace older smoke alarms – typically after 10 years – as recommended by manufacturer.

If the smoke alarm instructions are unavailable, there is some basic information, including the manufacturer's identification address, on the smoke alarm itself. Renters must inform landlords in writing of smoke alarm problems, such as a dead battery. The landlord has 5 days to correct the problem.

Do you have an escape plan?

Although functional smoke alarms usually give an early warning, it is important to have an adequate escape plan:

- Look for sources of fires on your property and eliminate or reduce them.
- Have at least two ways to escape a fire and an outside meeting location for everyone in the household.
- Call the fire department after you're outside.

Check smoke alarms today!

Guidelines for connecting the smoke alarm:

What kind of smoke alarms are required?

All smoke alarms used in Wisconsin must be Underwriters Laboratories (UL) listed, or equivalent, and must be either of the ionization or photo-electric types. (Heat detectors, which respond slower, may only be used in addition to smoke alarms.) In common areas of multiunit housing, a smoke detection system shall be installed per NFPA 72. For multi-unit housing built before January 1, 1982, and for one- and 2-family dwellings built before April 1, 1992, the smoke alarms may be self-contained and battery-operated. After the above dates, additional features may be required. (See table on back.)

Although not always required, the following are recommended:

- Interconnect all of a living unit's smoke alarms and have them powered by both a building circuit and batteries to ensure audible operation in all situations.
- Connect building-powered smoke alarms onto regular lighting circuits, ahead of any switch, so the loss of power to the alarm is likely to be noticed because the lights don't work.

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- Include strobe lights with alarms for the hearing impaired. (Besides those required in common use areas, strobes may be required in some individual living units.)
- In multi-unit housing, smoke alarms in living units may not require interconnection with the rest of the building's alarms, even though the common area smoke alarms need to be interconnected. This is to minimize potential false alarm problems.
- Locate a smoke alarm outside each sleeping area and inside each bedroom, and keep the bedroom doors closed for additional protection.

For more information please visit: <http://commerce.wi.gov/SBdocs/SB-SmokeAlarmBroch8282.pdf>

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