

# Smoke Alarms

## A Fire Safety Message from



Homeland Security  
and Emergency Services

Fire Prevention  
and Control

Smoke alarms sense smoke and/or heat and sound an alarm to warn residents of a fire. Almost every day a smoke alarm saves somebody's life. A smoke alarm can cut your risk of dying in a home fire nearly in half.

## Smoke Alarm Types

Be sure the smoke alarms you buy carry the label of a certified, independent testing lab. This tells you that a representative sample of the smoke alarm has been evaluated and meets nationally recognized requirements. Several types of alarms are available. Some are battery powered, others are powered by the household electrical current and some combine both. All will offer protection provided they are installed and maintained properly. Smoke alarms are readily available at hardware stores.

**Wireless:** Emerging technology offers the ability to have your smoke detectors interconnected so they will all sound when one activates—all without wires running between them. This is a great way to ensure that you will hear the alarm should one of the detectors in your home activate, wherever you may be in the house.

**Lithium powered:** Lithium powered smoke alarms have non-removable power cells that last for ten years and provide a solution to the problem of missing or dead batteries in smoke alarms.

## Smoke Alarm Maintenance

- **INSTALL** smoke alarms near each sleeping area and on each level of your home. Read and follow the manufacturer's installation and maintenance instructions.
- **TEST** your smoke alarm each month. This ensures it is working and familiarizes your family to the alarm sound.
- **MAINTAIN** batteries by replacing semi-annually. A good practice is to change them when you change your clocks. A "chirping" sound indicates that the battery is low and needs to be replaced. Clean your smoke alarm using a vacuum and/or dust brush without removing the alarm's cover.
- **REPLACE** any smoke alarm that is more than 10 years old.

## The Fire Emergency

- Knowing what to do to save life and property in the event of fire may be the most important protection you can provide. A balanced home fire protection plan should include installing and maintaining smoke alarms and making and practicing a home escape plan.
- Make sure everyone is familiar with the sound of the smoke alarm.
- Plan and practice a home fire escape plan with your family. Know at least two ways out of each room and plan a meeting place outside.
- When the alarm sounds, go directly to the meeting place and call the fire department from a neighbor's phone. Never go back inside the building.

