

Types of smoke alarms to choose from:

Photoelectric

Photoelectric smoke alarms mainly detect visible smoke. This type is strongly recommended by the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS).

Ionisation

Ionisation smoke alarms mainly detect the presence of extremely small particles of smoke.

The type most commonly installed in homes has been the ionisation smoke alarm. However, research indicates that photoelectric smoke alarms are generally more effective than ionisation types across a wider range of fires experienced in homes. For this reason, QFRS recommends that photoelectric smoke alarms be installed, especially if you are installing only one alarm. If you already have smoke alarms installed, QFRS recommends that you supplement the existing alarms with photoelectric types, especially between sleeping areas and exits from your home (e.g. hallways); and at the end of the service life of existing smoke alarms, replace them with photoelectric types.

The two types are explained in greater detail at www.fire.qld.gov.au/communitysafety/smokealarms.

These types of smoke alarms can be powered by:

- 9 volt batteries that have at least a one year life and the battery requires changing each year;
- Long-life 9 volt lithium batteries that can be renewable or non-removable that last the life of the alarm, up to 10 years. These avoid the need for the householder to replace the battery annually. In some models the battery cannot be removed due to the unit being sealed; and
- Mains power supply, with some models featuring a rechargeable battery back-up. Often called hard-wired (240 volt) smoke alarms, these offer the highest level of reliability, and must be installed by a licensed electrician.

Some smoke alarm models can be connected in groups (interconnected) so that if one alarm goes off it will also set off others. This will require work by an electrician.

Smoke alarms for the hearing and visually impaired are available.

Where do I place smoke alarms?

The minimum smoke alarm location requirements are the same as apply to new homes. There must be one alarm outside sleeping areas and one alarm on each level of the home. The laws will require the typical home to install one or two alarms. For increased protection, the QFRS recommends additional alarms be installed (for instance in children's bedrooms).

Further information about the location of alarms is available from www.fire.qld.gov.au.

For more information call:

1300 369 003



WAKE UP TO SMOKE ALARMS

From 1 July 2007, homes in Queensland must have smoke alarms installed.

It's the Law.



www.fire.qld.gov.au

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What do you need to know about smoke alarms?

Smoke alarms are devices that detect smoke and sound an alarm. When you go to sleep, your sense of smell also goes to sleep. If there is a fire, toxic fumes may overcome you before you wake and become aware of the fire.


Working smoke alarms

- Alert and wake you, allowing valuable time to get out of a house during a fire.
- Save your life
Reports indicate the risk of death in a house fire is reduced by more than half if a properly maintained smoke alarm is installed.
- Protect your property
The rental property is a big investment, and early warning of a fire can help to minimise damage.
- Reduce the damage to personal property
Almost one in five Queenslanders with home or contents insurance is deliberately underinsured. In this situation you may not be able to quickly regain your lifestyle.

What type of smoke alarm is needed?

Your protection against fire increases with the quality and type of smoke alarm that is installed. It is recommended that property owners consider installing smoke alarms that are more reliable than the basic alarm.

When choosing a smoke alarm, you need to consider the type of alarm and the power source by which it operates.



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What do I need to do?



If your home was built before 1 July 1997, and you don't already have smoke alarms installed, you will need to buy and install smoke alarms in accordance with Australian Standards.

If your home was built after 1997, it should have 240 volt (hard-wired) smoke alarms installed at the time it was built. This is a requirement under the Building Code of Australia (BCA).

If you have done major renovations to your home since 1997, it should have included the installation of 240 volt (hard-wired) smoke alarms.

How do the new laws affect residential rental properties?

If you are a landlord;

- You are required to install smoke alarms in your rental property. If your property is managed by an agent, they may be able to arrange for this to be done.
- The minimum legal requirement is an alarm in accordance with the smoke alarm Australian Standard. This can be met by a 9v battery operated smoke alarm, with a one year battery. However, a good quality 10 year battery alarm or hardwired alarm is more reliable and may be more effective in the long term.
- You must test and clean each smoke alarm within 30 days before the start of a tenancy agreement. Your agent may be able to arrange for this to be done for you to ensure your legislative requirement is met.
- In addition you must replace, in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions, each battery in the smoke alarm that is flat or that you or your agent is aware is almost flat within 30 days before the start of a tenancy. Your agent may be able to appoint suitable contractors to carry out this work.
- You must replace the smoke alarm unit before it reaches the end of its service life.* Your agent may be able to arrange for this to be done.
** Service life of a smoke alarm is usually indicated by the warranty offered by its manufacturer.
- If the smoke alarm reaches the end of its service life, you must replace it immediately. Your agent may be able to arrange for this to be done.
- Where notified by a tenant that a smoke alarm is not operating, you should have the smoke alarm checked by a competent professional, and as required, repaired or replaced. Your agent may be able to arrange for this to be done.
- To ensure compliance, if you are selling a property you will be required to lodge a form with the Queensland Land Registry stating that operational smoke alarms are installed in the property.

If you are a tenant;

- Your landlord is only required by law to test and clean smoke alarm/s at the start of a tenancy. If the property is managed by an agent, they may arrange for this to be done.
- You are required by law to test and clean each smoke alarm in the dwelling at least once every 12 months.
- You are required by law to replace, in accordance with the information statement (RTA Form 17a) provided to you, each battery that is flat or is almost flat.
- If you become aware that a smoke alarm in the rental property is not working, other than because the battery is flat or almost flat, you must advise the landlord or agent as soon as practicable.
** Please note that for public housing tenants the State Government has already installed hard-wired smoke alarms in all public housing dwellings.

Insurance – Tenants

Research indicates that nearly half of all renters do not have insurance of any kind.

To protect your personal possessions you should have your own contents insurance.

As a tenant you must be aware that household contents are not covered by the owners' or agents' insurance policies.

Insurance – Property Owners

Industry figures show that people underinsure.

Adequate insurance cover can provide peace of mind if your home and belongings are damaged or lost to fire.

Most insurance companies offer specific landlord policies.

As a property owner your home insurance policy could be affected by whether you have a smoke alarm installed. Check with your specific insurance provider.