

NEW LEGISLATION REQUIRES SMOKE ALARMS

Legislation enacted into law requires the installation of smoke alarms in residential buildings and structures constructed before **November 6, 1974**. Under this legislation, building owners have until March 14, 2007 to have smoke alarms installed in buildings.

The minimum requirements of the Act states that a smoke alarm, powered by a non-rechargeable battery be installed in each sleeping room or directly outside each sleeping room, and one on each floor level, including the basement.

The intent of this legislation is not to require/allow inspectors to review every structure in their jurisdiction and require that the owner install smoke alarms. The intent is that after March 14, 2007, when an inspector is conducting an inspection of rental property, or an inspection related to work requiring a permit, in a building which was constructed prior to November 6, 1974, the inspector is required to cite a violation for lack of a smoke alarm(s).

Smoke alarms are the residential fire safety success story of the past quarter century. Smoke alarm technology has been around since the 1960s. But the single-station, battery-powered smoke alarm we know today became available to consumers in the 1970s, and since then, the home fire death rate has been reduced by half.

A life-saving test: check your smoke alarms regularly

- Test your smoke alarms once a month, following the manufacturer's instructions.
- Replace the batteries in your smoke alarm once a year, or as soon as the alarm "chirps" a warning that the battery is low.
- Never "borrow" a battery from a smoke alarm. Smoke alarms can't warn you of fire if their batteries are missing or have been disconnected.
- Don't disable smoke alarms temporarily. If your smoke alarm is sounding "nuisance alarms," try relocating it farther from kitchens or bathrooms, where cooking fumes and steam can cause the alarm to sound.
- Regularly vacuuming or dusting your smoke alarms, following the manufacturer's instructions, can keep them working properly.
- Smoke alarms don't last forever. Replace yours every 10 years. If you can't remember how old the alarm is, then it's probably time for a new one.
- Consider installing smoke alarms with "long life" (10-year) batteries.