



Publication

Fire detection in the home

From: [Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage](#)

Published on: 28 April 2017

Last updated on: 25 November 2021

Remember: It can take as little as 3 minutes for irretrievable damage to be caused by smoke inhalation.

Smoke alarms

Many fires happen at night while people are asleep. Smoke from a fire can put sleeping people into a deeper sleep, it may not waken them. By installing smoke alarms you will have early warning of a fire, which gives you time to act before you and your family are overcome by dangerous smoke and fumes.

- four detectors should be installed in the average home
- make sure that all smoke/heat alarms are properly installed and maintained
- test the alarms every week and their batteries every year

Further information on smoke alarms

How many smoke alarms you need

In a standard two-storey house, four detectors should be installed – smoke detectors on each landing and in the living room and a heat detector in the

kitchen.

Where you fit them

On the ceiling as close to the centre of the room as possible. Make sure that you can hear the smoke alarm at night with the doors closed.

The different types of smoke alarm

There are two types of Smoke Alarm, “Ionisation” and “Optical”.

Ionisation Smoke Alarm

This is the cheapest and most common type of smoke alarm. It is very sensitive to small particles of smoke from “flaming” fires like chip pans. It will detect this type of fire at the early stages and before the smoke gets too thick to escape.

Optical Smoke Alarm

Slightly more expensive type but more effective at detecting larger particles from “slow burning” fires such as smouldering foam or PVC wiring.

10-year Ionisation or Optical smoke alarms are available and are fitted with a long life lithium battery or a sealed power pack that lasts for 10 years.

How often you should test the smoke alarms

Smoke alarms require very little maintenance but to ensure it operates when needed:

- once a week, test the smoke alarm by pushing and holding the test button until it activates
- every six months vacuum and brush the casing to get rid of dust

- every year change the battery (unless it is a 10 year battery)
- every 10 years replace the smoke alarm

Which smoke alarm is best suited for outside the kitchen

Optical Smoke alarms are best suited for this position as they are not so sensitive to small particles of smoke like toast cooking or rashers burning but they are ideally suited for larger particles of smoke.

What a heat detector is

A heat detector does exactly what it sounds like – it detects heat but not smoke or fumes. It is ideal for use in areas where there could be false activations due to steam, burning rashers, car fumes and so on.

National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management

Address:

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Rm. G59, Custom House,
Dublin 1, D01 W6X0

Part of

Policies

[Local Government](#)

[Circulars](#)

[About gov.ie](#)

[Consultations](#)

[Accessibility](#)

[Directory](#)

[Latest financial accounts](#)

[Policies](#)

[Privacy policy](#)

[Publications](#)

[Sell to Government](#)

Who Does What

Manage cookie preferences

Manage preferences