



Smoke Alarms – frequently asked questions

Do I need a smoke alarm in my home?

From 1 July 2007, owners of all houses and units in Queensland must install and maintain a smoke alarm.

Mains powered (240 volt) smoke alarms are already compulsory in properties built after 1997 and in properties that are being significantly renovated (more than 50% of the building).

What are smoke alarms?

Smoke alarms are devices that detect smoke and sound an alarm. Smoke alarms alert and wake occupants to smoke in their home, giving them valuable time to get out during a fire.

In Queensland, almost half of all home fire deaths occur between 12am-8am when most people are sleeping. During a fire, poisonous smoke and fumes will fill your house long before heat and flames spread, putting you into a deeper sleep.

Smoke alarms should not be confused with smoke detectors, which are devices without an audible alarm function. These are generally used in commercial premises.

What are the benefits of smoke alarms?

Smoke alarms can save your life - the risk of death in a house fire is up to three times higher in homes without smoke alarms when compared to homes with smoke alarms.

Smoke alarms can protect your property - early warning of a fire can help minimise damage.

Each year, an average of 1121 residential building fires resulting in an average of 16 deaths, 145 injuries and \$29.3 million of property damage are reported to the Queensland Fire & Rescue Service. If a smoke alarm is working correctly, it will provide the occupant with an early warning of fire or smoke, enabling them to take action to evacuate.

What are the different types of smoke alarms?

There are two choices of smoke alarms, depending on the preferred power supply, and several different smoke alarms for each power type.

9 Volt Smoke Alarms (with a one-year battery)

A 9 volt smoke alarm is stand alone and operated only by a battery.

- Easy to install
- Battery needs to be replaced regularly
- Batteries can be removed or may not be replaced, making them less reliable

Mains Powered (240 Volt) Smoke Alarms (also called hard-wired smoke alarms)

A 240 volt smoke alarm is connected to a home's electrical system and has battery back-up power supply.

- Considered more reliable in the longer term
- Some models use a battery to provide back-up power if the AC power fails
- More expensive
- Need to be installed by a qualified electrician

9 Volt Long-Life Lithium Battery Smoke Alarms (with a 10-year battery)

A 9 volt smoke alarm is stand alone and operated only by a battery.

- Easy to install
- Batteries do not need to be replaced
- Some models available with a sealed, tamper-proof battery
- More expensive than 9 volt, one-year battery, smoke alarms

** Note: All types of smoke alarms must be replaced at the end of the unit's life expectancy (see manufacturers' instructions).

Householders have a choice between photoelectric and ionisation smoke alarms – for more information on these go to www.fire.qld.gov.au/communitysafety/smokealarms

Where do I buy a smoke alarm?

Many hardware, home supply or general merchandise stores carry smoke alarms. Prices vary depending on brands, types and features.

The Queensland Fire & Rescue Service recommends you buy an alarm that carries the Standards Australia Mark.



For further information on smoke alarms go to the Queensland Fire & Rescue Service website at www.fire.qld.gov.au