Smoke Alarm Safety

Smoke alarms are proven to save lives. If you think your alarms may be older than 10 years, it's time to replace them. Don't forget; it's important to have working smoke detectors. They remain active while your family is asleep and are designed to wake everyone before it is too late.

For residents in need who cannot afford new smoke alarms, Staunton Fire & Rescue has a limited supply of single-station battery powered smoke alarms that can be installed by emergency responders between calls. To request an installation, please call us at 540.332.3884. The Fire Department cannot assist with changing or installing hard-wired smoke alarms.

Dinner Up in Smoke?

Don't pull the battery! Smoke alarms now come with hush buttons that temporarily silence them until the smoke clears.

Types of Smoke Alarms

There are three types of smoke alarms: ionization, photoelectric and a combination of the two which is commonly called a dual detector. Look for the UL stamp on any smoke alarm.

Ionization Smoke Alarms

Ionization smoke alarms monitor "ions" or electrically charged particles. Smoke particles change the electrical balance of the air. The alarm will sound when the change in electrical balance reaches a preset level, (IFSTA Fire and Life Safety Educator, Page 38).

Photoelectric Smoke Alarms

Photoelectric smoke alarms use a beam of light and a light sensor. Smoke particles change the amount of light that reaches the sensor causing the alarm to sound, (IFSTA Fire and Life Safety Educator, Page 39).

Dual Alarms

Dual smoke alarms combine ionization and photoelectric sensor systems to enhance home safety. A combo unit is considered to provide greatest overall safety in either situation. Recent research has shown that the standard ionization alarms have been unreliable in multiple tests of slow, smoky fires. Ionization alarm perform best in fast flaming fires.

Heat Detectors

Heat detectors are best used over hazards where flaming fires could be expected such as a garage or utility area. Heat detectors have a slower response than smoke detectors according to the National Fire Protection Association because heat generated by small fires tends to dissipate fairly rapidly, (NFPA Fire Protection Handbook, Pages 5-20, 5-58 & 59).