

# Home Fire Safety Inspection Check List

## Electrical Hazards

- Are appliances checked periodically to be sure they are in good operating condition?
- Are you careful not to run extension cords under rugs, over hooks, and nails?
- Are you careful not to twist, tie, wrap, or place too many bends in an extension cord? Never tie an extension cord in a knot.
- Are you using extension cords for longer than 90 days?
- Are you careful not to use extension cords for appliances, space heaters, water heaters, and other appliances that required more electricity?
- Are you careful to make sure appliances like space heaters, water heaters, and humidifiers and dehumidifiers are plugged in directly to an outlet?
- Does the gauge of both cords match?
- Do your lights dim when appliances are turned on?
- Do your lights flicker?
- Do you trip the same circuits over and over again?
- Have several light bulbs gone out at the same time?
- Is there adequate wiring in all rooms for today's electronics?
- Do you make sure the correct light bulbs are used with light fixtures and lamps? Make sure the watts in the light bulb do not exceed the lights manufactures instructions.

## Housekeeping

- Is your home or cabin Firewise/wildland fire protected?
- Do you keep rubbish cleaned out of attics, garages, and yards?
- Is paint kept in tightly closed metal containers?
- Have you made it a rule to never use flammable liquids for cleaning clothes or starting fires?
- Are oily rags kept in a tightly sealed metal container?
- Have all dried grass cuttings, tree trimmings and weeds been removed from your property?
- If you use a peat mixture for potting plants outdoors, do you empty the pots out around the exterior of you home before they decay?

## Heating and Cooking

- Is the screen always in front of your fireplaces?
- Has your fireplace been inspected and cleaned by a professional company?
- Does your chimney have a "spark arrester" or spark catching cover?
- Do you make sure combustibles are not stored near the stove, heater or fireplace?
- Is your furnace in good condition? Has it been inspected in the last five years?
- Do you keep clearance around you furnace, wood stove, and water heater?
- Is the filter for your forced air heater changed yearly and the venting cleaned?
- Is your wood burning stoves in good repair and located away from combustible walls and ceiling?

Is your water heater in good repair?  
Do you check your hot water heater release valve to make sure it is in working order?  
Do your children keep a safe distance from flame and heat sources?  
Do you teach your children how to cook and read directions?  
Do you keep the area around your stove top clear of recipe cards, cookbooks, hand towels, pot holders, and other combustibles?  
Do you read the directions and warning when using a new cooking *ingredient*, appliance, or recipe?  
Do you use the correct temperature for the cooking oil you are using  
Do you know how to put out a grease fire safety? DO NOT USE WATER!  
Do you teach your children how to use fire as a tool...not a toy?  
Do you teach your children about vapors and do they understand how vapors work?

### **Smoke Alarms & CO Alarms**

Have you installed a smoke detector outside sleeping areas, inside each sleeping room, on every level of your home, and in rooms with doors that close?  
Do you check your smoke detector(s) every month?  
Do you change your smoke detector(s) batteries twice every year? (Change your clock, change your battery).  
Is your Smoke Detector over 10 years old? Smoke detectors should be changed every 8-10 years.  
Do you vacuum and dust your smoke detectors?  
Have you installed CO alarms?  
Are your Carbon Monoxide Alarms installed in the proper place?  
How old is your CO Alarms. CO alarms should be changed ever 5-6 years or according to manufactures instructions.

### **Fire Escape Plan (E.D.I.T.H.)**

Does your family have a fire escape plan prepared?  
Is your escape plan posted and regularly practiced?  
Does each bedroom have two ways out/exits?  
Does your family know how to signal for help if they are trapped in an upper floor of your home?  
Has someone in your family been assigned to assist younger children, senior living in your home, and anyone who is disabled?  
Do all family members know how to dial 9-1-1 for fire, police and medical emergencies?  
Do you show your babysitter the escape routes from your home and review 9-1-1 with her or him?  
Does your family (and babysitter) know the first rule in fire emergencies: GET EVERYONE OUT FAST AND DON'T GO BACK INSIDE?  
Does your family have a meeting place?

### **Matches/Lighters and Careless Smoking Habits**

Do you keep all matches and lighters out of children's reach?  
Do you teach your children that lighters and matches are tools and not toys?  
Do you allow smoking in your home?  
Have you made the smoking area for you and your guest fire safe by providing a medal heavy ash can a distance away from your home/ structure. Remove any plants/pots with peat.  
Is "No Smoking in Bed" a rule of the house?  
Is your family aware that ashtrays should never be emptied into wastebaskets?  
Are there plenty of large ashtrays with a center island throughout the house?

Do you check for smoldering cigarettes butts in the furniture after entertaining in your home?

### **Dryer Safety**

Do you clean the lint from your dryer vent after every use?

Do you have your dryer vents and ducts cleaned professionally every year?

### **General Safety**

Do you have an Emergency Preparedness Plan?

Do you extinguish candles when you leave the area?

Do you use non-combustible containers to set candles on?

Do you teach your children that candles are tools for adults and not toys?

Do you have a rule in your home that no candles are allowed in children's bedrooms?

Do you make it a good practice to never run the dishwasher, clothes dryer, or washing machine when you are not home?

Do icicles from above or ice form around your gas meter in the winter months?

Do you read the manufacture instructions on the items you purchase for your home?

Do your children know their addresses?

You can request a Fire Safety Home Inspection from the Excelsior Fire District.

You should also consider hiring a certified electrician, a certified home inspector, and ask your local natural gas supplier or appliance store to come to you home and inspect all you appliances with a pilot light an make sure they are in good repair and not emitting carbon monoxide.

Check out the safety articles on this web site for more information on the items listed above.

Check out these web sites to find local people and business to help you complete your home safety check list.

Southlake-Excelsior Chamber of Commerce

[www.southlake-excelsiorchamber.com](http://www.southlake-excelsiorchamber.com)

Business Network International (BNI)

[www.bniexcelsior.com](http://www.bniexcelsior.com) or [info@bniexcelsior.com](mailto:info@bniexcelsior.com)

Kellie Murphy-Ringate, Excelsior Fire District Fire Inspector: 952-960-1692 or

[kmurphyringate@excelsiorfire.org](mailto:kmurphyringate@excelsiorfire.org)

For more information on safety go to [www.excelsiorfire.com](http://www.excelsiorfire.com)

Residential Smoke Alarms:

"What You Need To Know"

This article will go over residential smoke alarms. The most important thing you can do when purchasing a smoke, carbon monoxide (CO), or gas alarm/detector is to read the manufacturer's instructions completely. Follow the instructions on where and how to install them, what is needed to maintain them, and when to replace the alarm/detector. There are many types of smoke alarms as well as different types of detectors, such as heat and

flame. This article will cover residential smoke alarms.

### **Smoke Alarm Basics**

There are two common household types of smoke alarms: ionization alarms and photoelectric alarms.

#### **Ionization Detectors**

Ionization detectors respond more quickly to flaming fires with smaller combustion particles.

Ionization smoke alarms sound when electrically charged ("ionized") particles released in a fire interfere with the electrical current that flows through the alarm's detection chamber. The disruption in the current causes the smoke alarm to sound.

Flaming fires result from the ignition of items such as flammable liquids, wood or paper; cooking accidents; or from open flames such as candles that ignite other items. They produce large quantities of flames and lesser visible amounts of smoke.

Ionization models are best suited for rooms that contain highly combustible materials that can create flaming fires. These types of materials include flammable liquids, newspapers, and paint cleaning solutions.

In brief, ionization detectors are:

Fastest type to respond to flaming fires  
Lowest cost and most commonly sold

#### **Photoelectric Detectors**

Photoelectric detectors respond more quickly to smoldering fires that create a lot of smoke. Photoelectric smoke alarms sound when smoke particles interfere with and reflect the alarm's light beam that travels through the alarm's detection chamber. The presence of suspended smoke particles in the chamber scatters the light beam. This scattered light is detected and sets off the alarm.

Smoldering fires most often occur when smoking materials, such as cigarettes, are left unattended. In general, they initially produce minimal amounts of flames and larger, visible amounts of smoke.

Photoelectric models are best suited for living rooms, bedrooms and kitchens. This is because these rooms often contain large pieces of furniture, such as sofas, chairs, mattresses, counter tops, etc. which will burn slowly and create more smoldering smoke than flames.

The choices are not simple and will require additional research for you to do on your own. The one thing that is for sure - a working smoke alarm is better than a non-working alarm or no smoke alarm at all.

In review, photoelectric detectors are:

Fastest type to respond to smoldering fires and white or gray smoke  
Less prone to nuisance alarms from cooking

### **Styles of Smoke Alarms**

**Battery Operated Smoke Alarms** are the most common alarms found in residential homes. These alarms rely on a

battery for power. The prices for these alarms can range from \$1.00 to \$100.00.

**Long Life Smoke Alarms** with a 10-year, non-replaceable lithium battery are available and easy to find.

**Hardwired with Battery Back Up Alarms** are wired directly into your home's electrical system. The battery is a backup to ensure alarm works during power outages.

**Interconnected Hardwired Smoke Alarms** with battery backup. These are the type of alarms that are required in all new homes. These alarms are wired together and when one alarm goes off all the alarms in the home will sound.

**Wireless Smoke Alarms** with battery backup. These work like interconnected alarms and do not require **wiring** or an electrician to install.

**Voice Smoke Alarms** have an alarm and a pre-recorded voice that may say, "*Fire! Fire!*" or similar message to alert occupants. There are studies showing that the traditional, high pitched siren of a standard smoke alarm cannot be heard by the hearing impaired and an alarm alone will may not awaken a child in deep sleep in time if at all.

**Vocal Smoke Alarms** with an alarm and a recording device. The alarm allows you to record a personalized alarm message and provide personal escape instructions to your child, and have it replayed when the alarm sounds.

**Vibrate or Shaker Smoke Alarms** use a vibrating device to shake a bed or chair to awaken and alert a deep sleeper, a hearing impaired or deaf person.

**Strobe Alarms** use an extra bright strobe light to alert a deep sleeper, the hearing impaired or deaf of a fire. Some strobe alarms also include a vibrator device.

**Dual Detectors** come with the ability to alert occupants of smoke, Carbon Monoxide (CO), or hazardous gas. These detectors are cost efficient, but make sure you are aware of the recommended replacement life of the alarms/detectors. One drawback of dual detectors is that the Carbon Monoxide alarm generally needs to be replaced every 5 years (60 months) as well as natural and propane gas detectors. Smoke alarms usually do not need to be replaced for 8-10 years. If you purchase a dual detector you will have to replace it in 5 years. The recommendation for CO alarm placement may differ from smoke detectors placement. Smoke detectors should be in bedrooms, outside sleeping areas, and on every level of the home. Co alarms should be 10 feet out side of sleeping areas so they can detect the CO and alert the occupants. Alarms that detect all three are prone to false readings and malfunctions. Most dual alarms/detectors do not have as many features and do not have the ability to display the levels of CO or gas when it is detected.

Most smoke alarms mentioned in this article can be found at your local hardware store, large retail stores, big box and discount stores, on the internet, or a certified electrician.

### **Maintenance**

Always follow the manufacturer's instructions and recommendations on how to maintain your smoke alarms. All types of smoke alarms require regular testing. The fire service recommends that they should be tested once a month and the batteries changed at least once a year.

Some manufacturers will indicate which brand of battery to use in the alarm. Some alarms can malfunction if the batteries not recommend by the manufacture are used.

Smoke alarms should be replaced every 8-10 years. It is good practice to write the purchase date on the back so you know when to replace them. Remember each type of alarm has its own replacement schedule. Alarms should also be replaced when the they have been exposed to dust caused by construction, aerosols, certain chemicals, smoke from contents or a structure fire of any size, and any exposure to materials that may coat or damage the detection chamber.

To clean a detector, carefully vacuum the inside of a battery powered unit using the soft bristle brush. If electrically connected, shut off the power and vacuum the outside vents only. Restore power and test unit when finished.

Under no circumstances should you paint any part of your smoke alarm.

### **Features**

Smoke alarms come with a variety of features. No one fire alarm comes with all the features that are listed. Here are some of the common features found on most smoke alarms today - test alarm function, hush buttons, battery life indicator, and an easy-access battery drawer. Here are a few not so common features - directional speakers, escape

lighting, missing battery guard (insures a battery is placed inside the smoke alarm), remote-controlled alarm testing and silencing, and a tamper resistance alarm that comes with a pin to lock the battery and unit in place. There are countless type of smoke alarms and other detectors and alarms out there from which to choose. It is up to you, the consumer, to do your homework and decide which smoke alarm will work best for your home and help protect your loved ones.

To read more about smoke alarms, go to [www.excelsiorfire.org](http://www.excelsiorfire.org)

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