



## Cimarron Hills Fire Department

### Smoke Alarm and Carbon Monoxide Requirements

**SMOKE DETECTORS  
SAVE LIVES**



## FAQ: Replacing Smoke Alarms and Carbon Monoxide Alarms in Your Home

According to the U.S. Fire Association (USFA), the United States experiences an average of 3,040 fatalities and 14,960 injuries annually due to fires. Now, most state and local regulations mandate smoke detector installation in any area inhabited by people. These regulations stipulate that smoke detectors must be positioned close to each bedroom within a residence. Furthermore, some instances require their placement in hallways, stairways, and even garages. Moreover, in accordance with modern construction mandates, smoke detectors must be integrated into the electrical system, interlinked for simultaneous activation, and equipped with a battery backup mechanism.

The National Fire Protection Association strongly advocates a smoke detector replacement every ten years. This recommendation arises from the fact that, as these systems age, the reliability of their electrical components diminishes.

### 1. Can I replace my hardwired smoke alarms with battery-operated ones?

Homes originally built with hardwired, interconnected smoke alarms are generally required to maintain that same protection level. Replacing them with standalone battery-operated alarms may be considered a downgrade and is not recommended.

However, many manufacturers now offer battery-powered wireless interconnected alarms. These may be acceptable replacements as long as the system provides the same level of interconnection and coverage as the original hardwired setup.

If you're unsure which products comply, contact CHFD Fire Prevention for guidance.

### 2. Does the 2015 International Fire Code (IFC) address smoke alarm replacement?

Yes. The 2015 IFC requires that when smoke alarms are replaced, they must be installed in accordance with the original building standards and maintain equivalent performance. In most cases, that means:

- Keeping alarms in the same locations
- Keeping them interconnected
- Not reducing the level of fire protection in the home

If your alarms are more than 10 years old, replacement is recommended.

### 3. Are combination smoke/carbon monoxide (CO) alarms allowed?

Absolutely. Combination smoke/CO alarms are permitted and commonly used. They must be listed and approved devices from a recognized testing laboratory (UL, ETL, etc.).

Homes with fuel-burning appliances or attached garages are required to have carbon monoxide alarms installed near bedrooms.

### 4. What if one of my alarms is installed too high or is hard to reach?

Many homes have alarms placed in high or difficult-to-access locations, such as stairwells or vaulted ceilings. If reaching the alarm creates a safety concern, options include:

- Using wireless interconnected alarms and relocating the device to an accessible, code-compliant location
- Installing alarms with 10-year sealed lithium batteries to eliminate annual battery changes
- Working with a licensed electrician if wiring changes are required

### 5. Where To Place Smoke Detectors In Your Home

- **Keep Your Family Members Safe with These Fire Alarm Recommendations**

Based on data from the [National Fire Protection Association \(NFPA\)](#), more than half of fire deaths take place in homes with non-functional or absent smoke detectors. Additionally, the probability of dying in a home fire is decreased by 50 percent when you have functional smoke detectors. The significance of having these essential devices is evident, but where should you place them? **Follow these recommendations for smoke alarms:**

- Place smoke detectors in all bedrooms and outside each one.
- Fire alarms should be installed on all stories of your residence, and that includes basements.
- Place smoke detectors on the ceiling or in elevated positions on walls.
- When mounting them on walls, ensure they are approximately four to 12 inches from the ceiling to steer clear of dead air zones that can prevent smoke from getting to the device.
- If your ceiling is pitched or comes to a point, position smoke detectors within three feet (horizontally) of the peak but not closer than four inches (vertically) of the peak.
- Install them a minimum of three feet from ceiling fans.
- Position smoke detectors a minimum of 10 feet away from kitchen ranges to avoid false alarms.
- Once you position them properly, test them on a monthly basis to verify they are operational.

## 6. What are the New Carbon Monoxide and Smoke Alarm Requirements?

[New Carbon Monoxide and Smoke Alarm Requirements | Division of Housing](#)

### Effective December 31, 2024

All rental units receiving Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher or Project-Based Voucher rental assistance are required to have carbon monoxide detectors and smoke alarms.

New federal standards for installing carbon monoxide detectors and smoke alarms take effect December 31, 2024. These changes include:

- Carbon monoxide detectors are required in new locations.
- Smoke alarms are to be hardwired or have a 10-year battery life.

If the carbon monoxide detector or smoke alarm does not meet the federal standards, it must be corrected within 24 hours. Failure to timely correct the item may result in DOH not providing the housing assistance payment (abatement) for the days the unit was in a “failed” status due to the carbon monoxide and/or smoke alarm.

### Carbon Monoxide Detector Standards

- **Location:** In the immediate vicinity of each sleeping area OR within each sleeping room.  
Requires a carbon monoxide detector installed in the proper location:
  - All units that contain a fuel-burning appliance fireplace, regardless of whether the appliance or fireplace is currently being used.
  - Sleeping area or bathroom attached to sleeping area:
    - Contains a fuel-burning appliance or fireplace; or
    - Has adjacent spaces from which byproducts of combustion gases can flow.
  - Unit or sleeping area served by a forced-air furnace that is located elsewhere.
  - Unit or sleeping area in a building that contains a fuel-burning appliance or fireplace and
    - Carbon monoxide detector is not installed in an approved location between the fuel-burning appliance or fireplace and the unit or sleeping area; or
    - Carbon monoxide detector is not installed on the ceiling of the room containing the fuel-burning appliance or fireplace; or
    - The unit or sleeping area has communicated openings to the fuel-burning appliance or fireplace.
  - Unit or sleeping area located one story or less above or below an attached private garage that:
    - Does not have natural ventilation; or
    - Is enclosed and does not have a ventilation system for vehicle exhaust.
- The inspection will fail if the carbon monoxide detector:
  - Is missing; or
  - Does not produce an audio or visual alarm when tested.

## Smoke Alarm Standards

Smoke alarms must be installed in each rental unit in the appropriate locations per the National Fire Protection Association Standard (NFPA) 72 or any successor standard.

### Qualifying smoke alarms:

- For dwelling units built before December 29, 2022, and not substantially rehabilitated after that date, smoke alarms must:
  - Be hardwired; or
  - Use a 10-year, non-rechargeable, non-replaceable primary battery and is sealed, is tamper resistance, and contains silencing means; and
  - Provide notification for persons with hearing loss as required by the NFPA 72 or any successor standard.
- For dwelling units built or substantially rehabilitated after December 29, 2022, smoke alarms must be hardwired.

### The inspection will fail if the smoke alarm:

- Is missing; or
- Is not a qualifying smoke alarm as defined above; or
- Does not produce an audio or visual alarm when tested.

### Required Locations:

- Inside each sleeping area, outside each sleeping area and on each level, including basements.
- In each common area on each level in a project containing a dwelling unit.
- **Note:** Crawl spaces and unfinished attics are excluded.

## 7. Who can I contact for help?

If you have questions about alarms, code requirements, or acceptable replacement options, please contact:

Cimarron Hills Fire Department

Division of the Fire Marshal

Email: [firemarshal@cimarronhillsfire.org](mailto:firemarshal@cimarronhillsfire.org)

Phone: (719) 591-0960