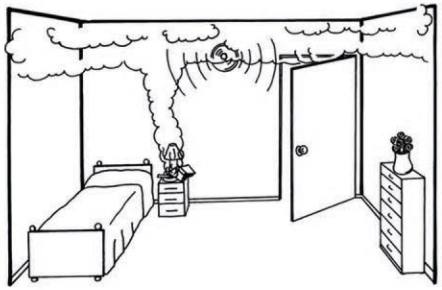

Q: Are there any free smoke alarm programs?

A: Most fire departments offer a free smoke alarm program. Contact your local fire department for more information.

Q: Smoke alarms are annoying and hard to deal with. Why do I need one?

A: Studies have shown that a working smoke alarm can triple your chances of surviving a fire. A clean, properly installed alarm can give you valuable minutes of early warning in an emergency.

State Fire Marshal's Office

Texas Department of Insurance
333 Guadalupe Street
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THE Q&A SERIES

The "Buzz" on SMOKE ALARMS

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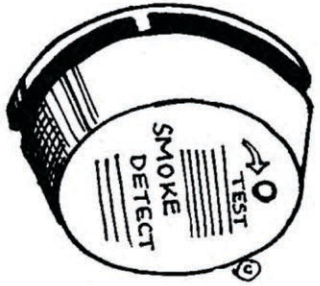
Q: How many types of smoke alarms are there?

A: There are two basic types of alarm: the **"ionization"** alarm and the **"photoelectric"** alarm. Many manufacturers are starting to distribute "dual-sensored" alarms that combine the two.

Q: Why are there two types?

A: Smoke particles can be detected in two different ways. Each alarm is specific to one of these methods.



Q: How does each type of alarm work?

A: Ionization Alarms scan for certain particles in normal air. When smoke enters the alarm, normal particles are not detected and the alarm goes off.

Photoelectric Alarms use light to detect the presence of smoke. A beam of light is shined on a sensor. When this beam is blocked by smoke, the alarm is triggered.

Q: How many smoke alarms should we have in our homes?

A: Most codes require at least one smoke alarm per floor, and it should be placed in the hallway adjacent to the bedrooms. However it is *recommended* that there be an alarm in each room except the kitchen or bathroom.

Q: How often should you test our smoke alarms?

A: Test your alarms once a month.

Q: How often should you change the batteries in our alarms?

A: Batteries should be changed at least once a year. However, it is recommended that you change the batteries twice a year. An easy way to remember this is to change the batteries when you change your clock each spring and fall. There are also models available with 10-year batteries.

Q: How long does a smoke alarm last?

A: Generally, about 8-10 years. After that they should be replaced.