



State of West Virginia
Department of Military Affairs and Public Safety
Joe Manchin III, Governor

Sterling Lewis, Jr.
State Fire Marshal

Phone: (304) 558-2191
Fax: (304) 558-2537

STATE FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE
1207 Quarrier St, 2nd Floor
Charleston, WV 25301

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact Person:

Carol Nolte, Deputy State Fire Marshal
Public Education Division
304-558-2191, Ext. 53223
E-mail: Carol.E.Nolte@wv.gov

“Smoke Alarms: The Difference between Life and Death”



Last year, West Virginia's fire departments responded to over 8,000 fires.
Thirty-six of these fires resulted in 42 deaths.

“What we know for certain is that many of these deaths could have been prevented if there had been working smoke alarms in the homes to alert the occupants of the fire,” commented Sterling Lewis, Jr., West Virginia's State Fire Marshal. “Fires can grow and spread so much more quickly than people realize. Every second of warning you get from a smoke alarm can literally mean the difference between surviving a fire or becoming a victim.”

There are many types of smoke alarms to suit different needs. Standard ionization and photoelectric smoke alarms are two of the most common types, and although they function differently, both detect and give notification of fires.

Ionization type alarms are characterized by their ability to sense faster-moving, flaming fires. Photoelectric alarms tend to sense slower, more smoldering-type fires quickly.

Press Release: Smoke Alarms
Page 2

Provided both kinds of alarms have the UL® seal (Underwriters Laboratories) to ensure they have met nationally recognized safety standards, having either type or using both types in the home provides adequate warning in case of fire. Smoke alarms have a wide range of user-friendly options, including hush buttons for nuisance alarms, long-life (10-yr.) batteries, and various types of notification sounds.

Remember these tips about smoke alarms:

- Have smoke alarms on every level of your home, especially outside sleeping areas—and preferably inside bedrooms as well.
- Test them at least once a month, and replace batteries at least once a year—use a birthday or anniversary as a reminder, or when you set your clocks for Daylight Savings Time.
- Replace detectors after 10 years.
- Place smoke alarms according to manufacturer's directions.
- Clean the outside ONLY of a smoke alarm by gently going over the cover with the brush attachment of your vacuum cleaner. Never paint a smoke alarm.
- Whenever a smoke alarm beeps, **take it seriously**. It might just be a false alarm from cooking, temperature fluctuations, or dust—but it might not. You can't afford to ignore the alert. Everyone in the family needs to react immediately.
- Develop and practice a **home escape plan**. Make sure your family knows two ways out of each room, a safe meeting place outside, how to call 9-1-1 once they're out, and why they should NEVER go back into a burning house.
- West Virginia State Code requires **all property owners** to provide and install a working smoke alarm in the vicinity of the sleeping areas.
- For more information on smoke alarms and home fire safety, visit these websites:

www.nfpa.org
www.usfa.dhs.gov
www.homesafetycouncil.org

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