

Every year thousands of people die from fires in the home. Fire kills an estimated 4,000 Americans every year. Another 30,000 people are seriously injured by fire each year. Property damage from fire costs us at least \$11.2 billion yearly.

Smoke Detectors

For most people, our homes are our havens. We feel safe and secure in the comfort of our homes. However, about two-thirds of our nation's fire deaths happen in the victim's family residence. Therefore, it is imperative that homeowners take precautions to prevent fires. The number one line of defense is to install and maintain working smoke alarms in the home.

Because most fatal fires occur in residential buildings between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. when occupants are more likely to be asleep, it is important to place smoke detectors in and near sleeping areas.

The US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) recommends consumers place a smoke alarm that meets the requirements of a professional testing laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL), on each level of multi-story homes outside sleeping areas, and inside bedrooms.

CPSC has worked to strengthen smoke alarm performance and installation requirements and is now studying audibility to see if there are ways to make the alarms more effective in waking children and alerting older people.

The US Fire Administration has the following to say about smoke alarms *"In the event of a fire, a smoke alarm can save your life and those of your loved ones. **They are the single most important means of preventing house and apartment fire fatalities by providing an early warning signal -- so you and your family can escape.**"*

Waterloo Fire Rescue believes that smoke alarms are one of the best safety features you can buy and install to protect yourself, your family and your home.

Smoke detector batteries need to be changed once a year or as needed. You should test your smoke detectors once a month by pushing the button. Most models will make a chirping, popping or beeping sound when the battery is losing its charge. When this sound is heard, install a fresh battery, preferably an alkaline type.

In addition to installing and maintaining smoke alarms, we recommend that you design a home escape plan with two exits from each room. You should practice your home escape plan twice a year, have a family meeting place away from your home and make sure that everyone in your family knows where it is.

