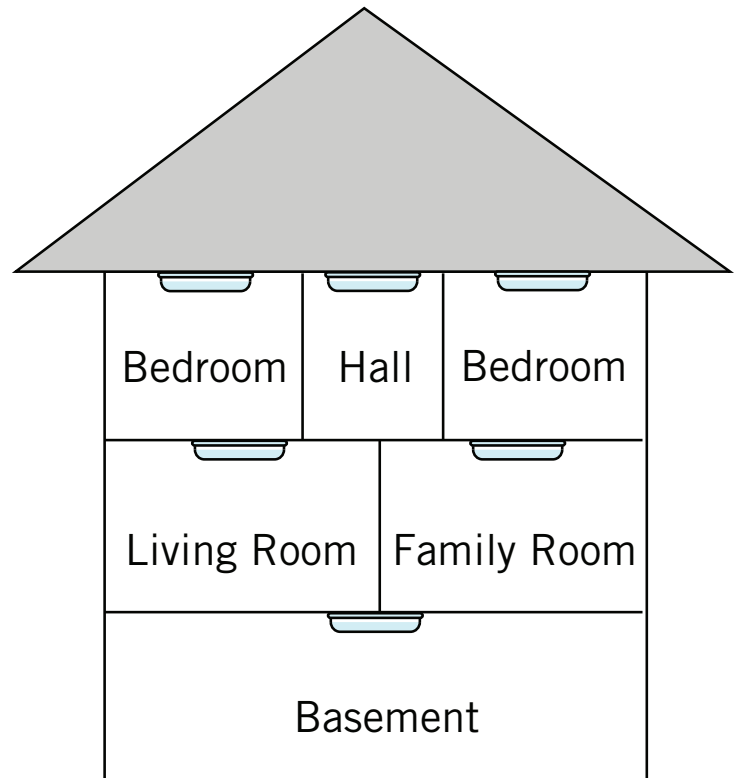


Smoke Alarms

Smoke alarms are an incredible success story. Once the concept took hold in the 1970s, it wasn't long before the fire death rate was cut in half! Now, more than three decades later, most homes have at least one smoke alarm but we still have a problem - the smoke alarms aren't working! In one quarter of the homes with smoke alarms, the smoke alarms don't work. The cause is missing, dead or disconnected batteries (National Fire Protection Association). Pillar To Post® would like to encourage you to pay more attention to your smoke alarms.

The two key goals of smoke alarms are -

- **To wake you up. You can't sense smoke and flame when you are asleep.**
- **Early warning. The sooner you know about a fire the better the possible outcome.**



Placement of Smoke Alarms

While you should consult the instructions provided with the smoke alarm, here are some general guidelines. We do not address local bylaws and codes here.

- There should be at least one smoke alarm per floor including the basement.
- Smoke alarms should be placed outside every separate sleeping area. Many authorities suggest an alarm inside each bedroom as well.
- The alarm can be placed on the ceiling or high up on the wall. If the alarm is on the ceiling, it should be at least four inches away from any walls. If the alarm is on the wall, it should be at least four inches but not more than twelve inches from the ceiling.
- Peaked ceilings have stagnant air at the top. The smoke alarm should be three feet from the highest point.
- Do not place the smoke alarm where it could be affected by drafts such as next to a window or air vent.

Maintaining

Test the smoke alarm once per month by pressing the test button until the alarm sounds then release the button. If the smoke alarm is battery operated, replace the battery every year. If you hear a chirping sound from the smoke alarm, change the batteries. Dust or vacuum the surface periodically. Replace the entire unit if it is older than 10 years or if you are not sure how old it is. Print the installation date inside the cover.

False Alarms

Nuisance tripping of your smoke alarm is bound to happen occasionally. Unfortunately, many people remove the battery to silence the alarm with the good intention of replacing it after the smoke clears. Here are some better ways to deal with nuisance tripping: Use an alarm with a 'hush button'. Move the smoke alarm a little further from the kitchen area. Try a different type of alarm. Some experts say that a photoelectric smoke alarm is a little less sensitive to common causes of false alarms.

Hard Wired Alarms

Many homes today have smoke alarms wired right into the household electrical system. In addition, some homes have interconnected smoke alarms. This means if one alarm in the home sounds then the others sound as well.

Escape Plan

Smoke and flame can spread quickly so you need to react quickly. It is vital that you and your family know what to do on hearing a smoke alarm. You should plan an escape route from every area of the home and identify a safe area to meet outside the home. You should rehearse the escape plan with your family. Walk through and identify obstacles that may slow you down such as windows that are jammed or exits that are crowded with storage etc.

