

10-YEAR SMOKE ALARMS & OREGON'S LAW



New smoke alarm mandates (ORS 479.250-300) recently became effective in Oregon. How do they affect you?

LEGAL MANDATES:

Since January 1998, any ionization-type smoke alarm sold or manufactured in Oregon must have a 10-year lithium battery and a “hush” feature. In addition, effective January 2002, Oregon law also requires that:

- All ionization smoke alarms in tenant-occupied apartments and rental homes must have a “hush” feature and a 10-year battery (if solely battery operated).
- Prior to the sale of a home, the Seller(s) must comply with the same requirements as stated above.

THE NEW SMOKE ALARM(S):

Smoke alarms which fulfill the requirements of the law can be purchased at any local electrical supply, hardware, or home improvement store. These new smoke alarms include the following features:

- Powered by lithium batteries designed to last 10 years.
- Limited access to the batteries (depending on the model) to deter/prevent tampering and/or disabling.
- A “hush” button to silence the unit in case of nuisance alarms such as shower steam or cooking smoke.
- A test button to regularly check all functions of the alarm.

PLACEMENT & MAINTENANCE:

- Refer to manufacturer’s instructions for installation. Generally, smoke alarms should be mounted high on a wall (4” – 12” from ceiling) or on the ceiling.
- Install one unit on each level of your home and one outside sleeping areas or in each bedroom.
- Place the units away from cooking areas, garages, and/or humid areas such as bathrooms and/or showers.
- Push the test button monthly. Do not use real or artificial smoke when testing as this might clog the unit.
- Keep the unit clean – vacuum or dust the cover regularly.
- After ten years, all smoke alarms - regardless of type - must be replaced because the sensors wear out (check the date stamp on the smoke alarm).

Note: Most residences are equipped with ionization alarms that will need to be replaced. To determine what type of alarm you have, first check the identification label. Standard battery ionization alarms are generally equipped with an AA or 9-volt battery and will also have a radioactive symbol or warning statement inside or on the back of the alarm. If in doubt, contact the manufacturer.

If your ionization alarm is hard-wired (runs off your electrical system), it must be replaced with a hard-wired alarm that has a “hush” feature. However, the back-up battery does not need to be a 10-year lithium battery. Also a hard-wired (electrical) system cannot be replaced with single-station, battery-operated smoke alarm(s).

Non-compliance to the smoke alarm law constitutes a violation of state statute and offenders can be cited. In addition, homeowners and property managers could find themselves named in a lawsuit should a tenant be injured and/or die in a fire in a dwelling without the new smoke alarm(s).

Only *WORKING* smoke alarms can save lives!

