



Fact Sheet

Information about Smoke Alarms

Only working smoke alarms save lives.

Your working smoke alarm combined with a well rehearsed exit plan could make all the difference to your safe and successful emergency exit. When you are sleeping you have no sense of smell so a smoke alarm becomes your electronic nose.

A small fire can take over an entire room in just 2 – 3 minutes. That's why here in the Territory, working smoke alarms have to be in every home or residential dwelling.

Residential dwellings include moveable dwellings such as caravans and temporary accommodation including safari-style tents.

Most homes already have working smoke alarms.

However, if your home was built before 1 July 1997 and you don't already have smoke alarms installed, you now need to install an approved photoelectric smoke alarm ¹. This can be a 240 volt hard wired unit with a 9 volt battery backup, installed by a qualified electrician OR a 10 year sealed lithium battery unit that can be manually installed according to the manufacturer's instructions.

If your home was built or has undergone major renovations after 1 July 1997, it should already have 240 volt (hard wired) smoke alarms installed. Since 1 May 2014, for new or renovated homes, there is a requirement under the National Construction Code (NCC) - Building Code of Australia (BCA); part 3.2.7; section 3.7.2.2; sub-section (d) that where there is more than one alarm they be interconnected.

Owner occupied residential properties with hard wired (240 volt) *ionisation* smoke alarms already installed only need to replace them with compatible mains powered approved photoelectric alarms when the ionisation smoke alarms cease to function. Home owners may choose to replace their alarms sooner but this is not a legal requirement.

How can I tell what type of alarm I have installed?

If you are unsure which type of smoke alarm you have, check the base or edge of the alarm. This radiation symbol means it is an ionisation model.

Radiation symbol



How should I dispose of my old ionisation alarms safely?

Individual, domestic smoke alarms may be disposed of in domestic and industrial waste. The radiation sign is covered before disposal. Up to ten domestic smoke alarms may be disposed of at any one time. More than ten must be disposed of in accordance with the Code of Practice of the near-surface disposal of Radioactive Waste in Australia (1992) (for further information email envirohealth@nt.gov.au).

Approved smoke alarm means a photoelectric smoke alarm that:

- (a) complies with AS3786 (Smoke alarms); and
- (b) is wired to 240 volts (with 9 volt battery back up) or is a sealed 10 year lithium battery unit.

Sale or Tenancy Requirements

Where residential property owners are renewing a tenancy or selling a property or dwelling, approved photoelectric smoke alarms must be installed by the owner prior to the occupancy of the tenant or the completion of the sale transaction.

In the case of a leased property, once the landlord installs approved smoke alarms, it is then the tenants' responsibility to maintain those alarms in good working order.

So just to clarify - All residential properties or moveable dwellings should now have approved photoelectric smoke alarms installed, however, premises that currently have working *ionisation* smoke alarms installed do not have to change to a photoelectric smoke alarm until one of the following occurs:

- ☛ the ionisation smoke alarm ceases to function – the day of cessation;
- ☛ the owner enters into a contract to sell the premises or dwelling – the day before contract settlement;
- ☛ the owner agrees to enter into a tenancy agreement, or renew or extend a tenancy agreement in relation to the premises – the day before the tenancy agreement or renewal or extension takes effect;
- ☛ the owner agrees to enter into a hire agreement, or renew or extend a hire agreement, in relation to the dwelling – the day before the hire agreement or renewal or extension takes effect.

Where can I buy a smoke alarm?

Any hardware, home supply or general merchandise stores, fire protection companies and electrical retailers stock a variety of smoke alarms. Prices vary depending on brands, types and features.

The Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service recommend you buy an alarm that carries the Australian Standard Mark. It is very important that you confirm with the retailer that they are providing you with an approved photoelectric smoke alarm.



How do I install a smoke alarm?

10 year sealed lithium battery photoelectric smoke alarms can be installed by anyone in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

240 volt (mains power) smoke alarms must be installed by a licensed electrician. Do not attempt to do your own wiring unless you are qualified to do so. It is recommended you request a receipt or certificate on completion from the installer and retain this for your records and future use if you sell or lease your property.

Where should I install smoke alarms?

Class 1a buildings (normal residential buildings)

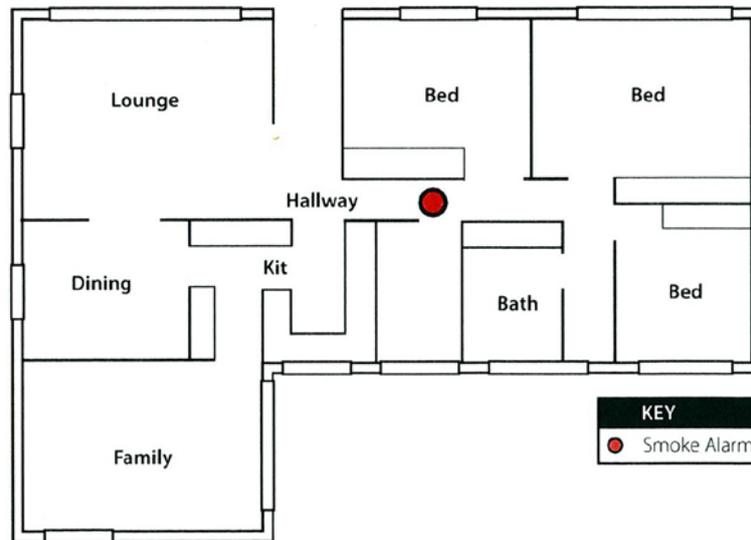
Smoke alarms must be installed in a Class 1a building on or near the ceiling in –

- (a) any storey containing bedrooms –
 - (i) between each part of the dwelling containing bedrooms and the remainder of the dwelling; and
 - (ii) where bedrooms are served by a hallway, in that hallway; and
- (b) any other storey not containing bedrooms (see Fig. 3 for multilevel)

For a sole-occupancy unit in class 2 and 3 buildings or a class 4 part of a building

Specification E2.2a clause 3c(i) of the Building Code; must be installed (i) within each sole occupancy unit on or near the ceiling in any storey (A) containing bedrooms – (a) between each part of the sole occupancy unit containing bedrooms and the remainder of the sole occupancy unit; and (B) not containing any bedrooms, in egress paths; and (ii) in a building not protected by a sprinkler system, in public corridors and other internal public places in accordance with AS1670.1.

Figure 1 – Class 1a and Class 2 buildings

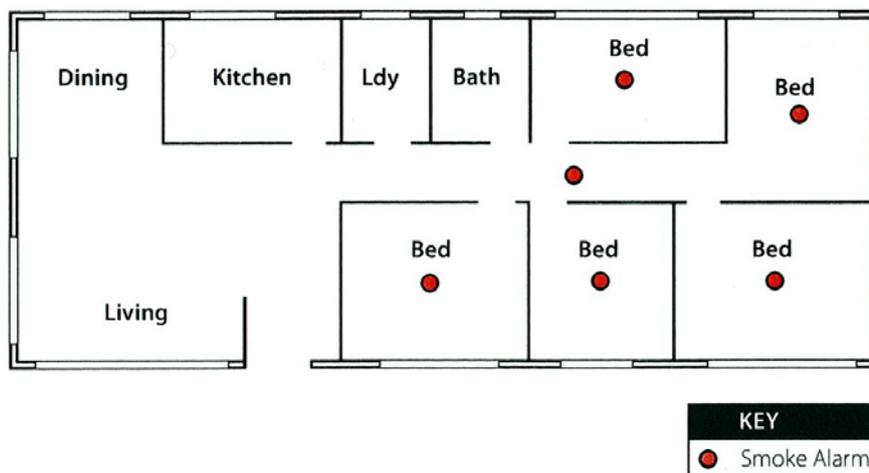


Class 1b buildings (Boarding Houses)

Smoke alarms must be installed on or near the ceiling –

- (a) in every bedroom; and
- (b) in every corridor or hallway associated with a bedroom, or if there is no corridor or hallway, in an area between the bedrooms and the remainder of the building; and
- (c) on each other storey (see Fig. 3 for multilevel)

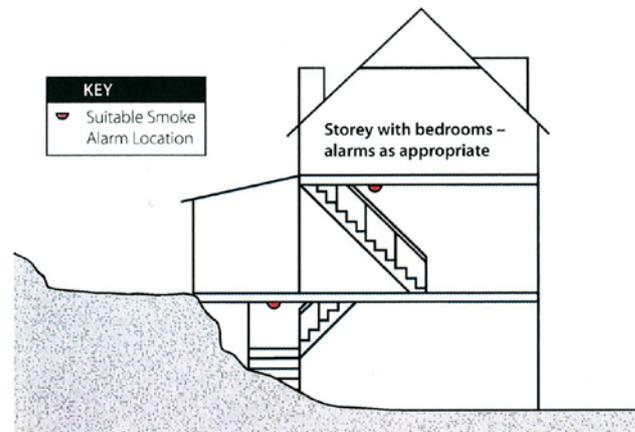
Figure 2 – Class 1b buildings



Multilevel Homes and Properties

Smoke alarms should be installed in each bedroom, in corridors and hallways that lead to exits and the living area. If you are installing smoke alarms in a multilevel home or property you should have an additional alarm in the stairway between each level. Often people sleep with their bedroom doors closed at night and only a smoke alarm installed in that room will detect a fire fast enough to get out safely.

Figure 3 – Multilevel homes and properties



Installation of smoke alarms

Smoke alarms should be installed on or near the ceiling, with special care taken to avoid installation in the following areas:

- the apex of cathedral ceilings
- the corner junction of walls and ceilings
- between exposed beams, where there may be a dead air space

If it is not practical to install the smoke alarm on the ceiling, then it may be installed on the wall between 300mm to 500mm below the ceiling.

For cathedral ceilings, between 500mm and 1500mm from the apex to the top of the alarm.

