

# Smoke Alarm Requirements

It is compulsory to install smoke alarms in all residential buildings. This includes houses, units, flats, boarding houses, hostels, accommodation for the aged, etc.

Smoke alarms must be installed on or near the ceiling of every storey. Smoke alarms are intended to detect smoke before it reaches people sleeping in a building. Therefore they must be located in a position designed to wake sleeping occupants up and in time to evacuate a building.

All smoke alarms are required to be connected to the mains power with a battery back-up; however, if the building was constructed prior to 1 August 1997, battery operated smoke alarms are acceptable. All smoke alarms must comply with Australian Standard AS3786.

If you are renting a dwelling or unit, it is your landlord's responsibility to ensure smoke alarms are installed and kept in working condition. However, you can take action to ensure compliance with the Regulations at any time.

It is important that your smoke alarms are checked and maintained on a regular basis.

## Location of smoke alarms

Smoke alarms should be positioned to detect smoke before it reaches the sleeping occupants of a building. The alarm is designed to wake the occupants and give them time to evacuate the building.

### 1 Sleeping areas

The regulation requires a smoke alarm be located "between each area containing bedrooms and the remainder of the dwelling".

In some dwellings, bedrooms are located in a common area and connected by a hallway. Smoke alarms can be located in hallways, located on the ceiling between sleeping area and remainder of dwelling.

However, if the bedrooms are not grouped in a common area or no connecting hallway exists, then an alarm must be located within 1.5m of the entrance to each bedroom.

### 2 Other storeys

An alarm is required on every storey, located in the path of travel people will most likely take to evacuate the building. This will ensure an alarm is activated before smoke makes the common exit path impassable.

If the bedrooms are on the first floor, then an alarm must be positioned near the area of the interconnecting stair at ground level.

If the other storey is not connected to the remainder of the building — for instance, a ground floor garage — then the alarm must be centrally located in the lower area.

In all cases, the alarm must be audible in the other storey. Interconnecting the units so the alarm within the sleeping area on other levels is activated will meet this requirement.

### 3 Other residential buildings

In addition to providing smoke alarms to sole-occupancy units, they must also have a smoke alarm installed in all other habitable rooms. Kitchen areas are the exception — suitable self-contained heat alarms may be installed and in other areas (public corridors, lobbies, etc.), smoke alarms must be installed not more than 5m from any wall and not more than 10m between detectors. These alarms must be audible to sleeping residents.

Other storeys not connected to the remainder of the building (for instance a garage or laundry), or not part of a public corridor, require an alarm centrally located in the lower area. In all cases, the alarm must be audible in the other storeys. As with alarms in public corridors, a cheap and effective way of achieving this would be to interconnect the units so the alarm in the unit within the sleeping area is activated.

## Mounting of smoke alarms

Smoke alarms must be installed on or near the ceiling.

Take special care to avoid dead air spaces. A dead air space is an area in which trapped air will prevent smoke from reaching the alarm. This generally occurs at the apex of cathedral ceilings, the corner junction of walls and ceilings, or between exposed floor joists etc. If it is impractical to mount the smoke alarm on the ceiling, then it may be located on the wall. The top of the smoke alarm must be between 300mm and 500mm of the ceiling.

The distance from the apex of a cathedral to the top of the alarm must be between 500mm and 1500mm.

**More information**

For further information, please contact Darebin City Council Building Services on 8470 8899. or download an information sheet on smoke alarm requirements [here](#)