



SMOKE ALARM MAINTENANCE AND REPLACEMENT

MAINTENANCE

How do I keep my smoke alarms working?

Smoke alarms can only save lives if they are well maintained and work properly.

Steps to remember:

- Once a month check the battery by pressing the test button. If you cannot reach the button easily, use a broom handle.
- Keep them clean. Dust and debris can interfere with their operation, so vacuum over and around your smoke alarm regularly.
- Replace the batteries at least once a year. Pick a memorable day (e.g. April Fool's Day, anniversary or your birthday) and replace the batteries each year on that day. In most models when batteries are low the detector will sound a short 'BEEP' every minute or so. This is your reminder to replace the batteries.
- Smoke alarms must never be painted.
- If cooking smoke sets off the alarm, do not disable it. Turn on the range fan, open a window or wave a towel near the alarm until the alarm stops beeping; or use the hush button (if fitted).
- Do not remove the batteries from your smoke alarm.
- Smoke alarms wear out over time. They should be replaced prior to the expiry date on the manufacturer's warranty. You may want to write the purchase date with a marker on the inside of the smoke alarm unit. That way, you'll know when to replace it.
- Read the manufacturer instructions.
- All types of smoke alarms have a limited life-span and need to be replaced according to manufacturer's instructions.

For more information, relating to the maintenance responsibilities in rental properties, refer to the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service "Wake Up to Photoelectric Smoke Alarms" brochure.

REPLACEMENT

Why do I need to replace my smoke alarm?

- Both hard-wired and battery operated smoke alarms are manufactured to have a recommended service life of at least 10 years under normal conditions of use (AS 3786).
- After 10 years smoke alarms may malfunction and their efficiency compromised with accumulated dust, insects, airborne contaminants and corrosion of the electrical circuitry.
- A smoke alarm constantly monitors the air 24 hours a day. At the end of 10 years, it has gone through millions of monitoring cycles. After so much use, components may become less reliable. This means that as the smoke alarm gets older, the potential of failure increases.
- Most smoke alarms have an expiry or replace by date written on them.
- QFRS strongly recommend that when your current smoke alarm becomes faulty or nears the end of its service date, that you replace it with a photoelectric smoke alarm and that multiple alarms are interconnected.
- The Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC) position is "that all residential accommodation be fitted with photoelectric smoke alarms" and "that all smoke alarms in single dwellings (Class 1 buildings) be interconnected".

Queensland Fire and Rescue Service recommend that all smoke alarms be replaced after 10 years.

How do I dispose of a smoke alarm I've replaced?

Individual or small numbers of ionisation or photoelectric smoke alarms can be safely disposed of in household rubbish. The small amount of radioactive material in a domestic ionisation smoke alarm is insufficient to cause harm to people or the environment.