



# Smoke Alarm Requirements for Apartments

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While 94 percent of American homes have at least one smoke alarm, more than one-third of these alarms don't work because of dead or missing batteries. Without a working smoke alarm as an early warning device, fire can spread unnoticed through the household, blocking escape routes and filling rooms with deadly smoke. The Orange County Fire Authority recommends that you have a working smoke alarm in every sleeping area and in hallways.

- **Install** at least one smoke alarm on each level, in each bedroom, and outside each sleeping area. Alarms must be loud enough to hear while sleeping, even with the door closed.
- **For the hearing impaired**, install smoke alarms that vibrate and/or flash a strobe light.
- **Test** smoke alarms once a month by using the alarm's test button.
- **Vacuum or dust** your smoke alarm following manufacturer's instructions.
- **Change batteries twice a year!** Change the batteries in your smoke alarm when you change your clocks at daylight savings and standard time, or as soon as it begins to chirp, whichever ever comes first.
- **Replace** the entire smoke alarm unit every ten years.
- **Mount** smoke alarms at the correct level to respond to rising smoke. Ceiling-mounted alarms should be installed at least four inches away from the nearest wall; wall-mounted alarms should be installed 6 to 12 inches from the ceiling.
- **Don't install** smoke alarms near windows, exterior doors, or ducts where drafts might interfere with their operation.
- **Don't paint or decorate your smoke alarms.** This can prevent them from working properly when you need them most.
- **Never** disconnect or borrow a battery from a smoke alarm.
- **Ensure** that everyone in your home can hear and recognize the sound of the alarm and knows how to react immediately.



***Most home fires occur between the hours of 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. when the occupants are sleeping. By alerting you to a fire early, smoke alarms provide you time to escape and greatly reduce your chances of dying in a home fire by 40 percent.***

# Legal Requirements

## Installation of Smoke Alarms [California Building Code 310.16.2 (A)(2) and Health and Safety Code 13113.7]

The owner shall supply and install smoke alarms in:

- **All new** multi-family residential units constructed since January 1, 1985 and
- **All other existing** multi-family residential units by no later than **January 1, 1987**.

## How Many are Required? [California Building Code 310.9.1.4]

- One smoke alarm is required per floor in non-sleeping areas, AND
- One smoke alarm is required in each sleeping room, AND
- One smoke alarm is required in the hallway that directly serves the sleeping rooms.
- At least one smoke alarm shall be installed within enclosed stairwells serving more than one dwelling unit.
- [Note: Smoke alarms are not required in attics, garages, or kitchens].

## Types of Alarms [California Building Code 310.39.1.3 and Health and Safety Code 13114]

- **Listing:** Smoke alarms must be approved and listed by the State Fire Marshal and installed in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- **Type:** Smoke alarms may be either photoelectric-type or photoionization-type.
- **Power:** In new construction, smoke alarms shall be powered by the building wiring along with a battery back up. In existing buildings, smoke alarms may be solely battery powered.

## 24 Hour Central Station Monitoring [California Building Code 1006.2.9.1.1]

Monitored Fire Alarm Systems are generally required in new apartment buildings that:

- Are three or more stories in height, OR
- Contain 16 or more dwelling units.

## Maintenance of Smoke Alarms [California Building Code 310.16.2 (e)]

Each owner/manager is required to:

- **Test and maintain every smoke alarm annually.**
- Maintain a record of all smoke alarm testing and replacement.
- Provide maintenance records to fire or building inspectors upon request.
- Notify tenants at least 24 hours prior to accessing the dwelling.

## Tenants are Responsible for:

- Allowing the owner/manager access to the dwelling unit for testing purposes during regular business hours.
- Notifying the owner/manager when a smoke alarm is known to be inoperative.
- Not tampering with or disabling the smoke alarm or other fire protection equipment (**California Penal Code (PC 148.4)**)

These notes summarize regulations that apply to cities within OCFA jurisdiction: Aliso Viejo, Buena Park, Cypress, Dana Point, Irvine, Laguna Hills, Laguna Niguel, Laguna Woods, Lake Forest, La Palma, Los Alamitos, Mission Viejo, Placentia, Rancho Santa Margarita, San Clemente, San Juan Capistrano, Seal Beach, Stanton, Tustin, Villa Park, Westminster, Yorba Linda, and Unincorporated Orange County. Code enforcement officers will use actual code language to determine the appropriate fire protection features for each particular building within each particular city. Existing buildings may have been constructed using older codes. Specific questions should be directed to the OCFA Fire Prevention Department or visit our website at [www.ocfa.org](http://www.ocfa.org).