

WHAT IF I AM A LANDLORD?

From 1 January 2017

- You are required by law to install and maintain smoke alarms in your rental property.
- The minimum legal requirement for all existing dwellings is a 9-volt battery operated smoke alarm that complies with Australian Standards.
- A good quality non-removable 10-year battery powered smoke alarm, or a hardwired alarm, is more reliable and effective.
- You must test and clean each smoke alarm within 30 days before the start of a tenancy agreement.
- In addition you must replace, in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, each battery in the smoke alarm that is flat, or almost flat, within 30 days before the start of a tenancy.
- The owner must replace smoke alarms when:
 - They reach 10 years after the date of manufacture; or
 - They do not work (including during a tenancy).
- Owner's requirements can be fulfilled by an agent acting for the owner.

From 1 January 2022

- As above except:
- All smoke alarms must be photoelectric, hardwired or 10-year tamper proof battery powered and all interconnected.
- Smoke alarms must be installed on each storey:
 - » in each bedroom; and
 - » in hallways which connect bedrooms and the rest of the dwelling; or
 - » if there is no hallway, between the bedrooms and other parts of the storey; and
 - » if there are no bedrooms on a storey at least one smoke alarm must be installed in the most likely path of travel to exit the dwelling.

How will compliance be achieved?

On the sale of a property, the vendor must lodge a form with the Queensland Land Registry (www.dnrm.qld.gov.au) stating whether or not compliant smoke alarms are installed in the property and the purchaser has been informed of the fact. Fire Officers will also investigate complaints received. Fines apply for failing to install or interfering with the operation of smoke alarms.

Insurance – property owners

- Industry figures show that people underinsure.
- Adequate insurance cover can provide peace of mind if your home and belongings are damaged or lost to fire.
- Most insurance companies offer specific landlord policies.
- As a property owner your home insurance policy could be affected by whether you have a smoke alarm installed.
- Check with your specific insurance provider.

WHAT IF I AM A TENANT?

- You are required by law to test and clean each smoke alarm in the dwelling at least once every 12 months. QFES recommends smoke alarms are tested once a month.
- You are required by law to replace, in accordance with the information statement (RTA Form 17a) provided to you, each battery that is flat or is almost flat during your tenancy.
- If you become aware that a smoke alarm in the rental property is not working, other than because the removable battery is flat or 'chirping', you must advise the landlord or agent as soon as practicable.
- Your landlord is required to test and clean smoke alarms within 30 days prior to the start of a new tenancy or when a tenancy is renewed. If the property is managed by an agent, they may arrange for this to be done.
- Please note that for public housing tenants the Queensland Government has already installed hardwired smoke alarms in all public housing dwellings.

Insurance – tenants

- Research indicates that nearly half of all renters do not have insurance of any kind.
- To protect your personal possessions you should have your own contents insurance.

safehome

Safehome is a FREE service provided by Queensland Fire and Emergency Services to householders in an urban fire service area. Local firefighters will come to your home to assist you to recognise fire and safety hazards in and around the home. Once the hazards are identified you can then take steps to eliminate them. A visit should take no longer than 45 minutes.

You will receive advice on correct positioning and installation of smoke alarms, a safety pack and checklist.

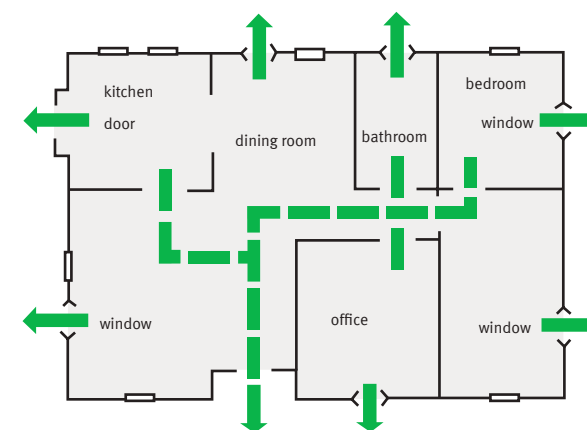
Call 13 QGOV (13 74 68) for a Safehome visit.

Do I need a fire escape plan?

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services recommends that you have a fire escape plan.

A smoke alarm will alert you to a fire, but what you do next is a matter of life and death. To survive it is essential you know how to escape.

- Draw your escape plan on a sheet of paper or visit www.qfes.qld.gov.au.
- Plan two ways out of every room (if possible).
- Pick a meeting place outside the home, such as the letterbox.
- Call the fire service on 000 (Triple Zero).
- Practise your fire escape plan regularly, at night, with the lights off.
- Practise your escape on hands and knees.
- Consider how your security (e.g. locked doors and windows) may stop your escape.



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Smoke alarms in Queensland



New smoke alarm legislation

From 1 January 2027

Smoke alarms in all dwellings must:

- » be photoelectric (AS 3786-2014); and
- » not also contain an ionisation sensor; and
- » be less than 10 years old; and
- » operate when tested; and
- » be interconnected with every other required smoke alarm in the dwelling so all activate together.

Smoke alarms must be installed on each storey:

- » in each bedroom; and
- » in hallways which connect bedrooms and the rest of the dwelling; or
- » if there is no hallway, between the bedrooms and other parts of the storey; and
- » if there are no bedrooms on a storey at least one smoke alarm must be installed in the most likely path of travel to exit the dwelling.

Smoke alarms must be either hardwired or powered by a non-removable ten year battery.

Prescribed locations for installing smoke alarms

Where practicable smoke alarms must be placed on the ceiling. Smoke alarms must not be placed:

- » within 300mm of a corner of a ceiling and a wall;
- » within 300mm of a light fitting;
- » within 400mm of an air-conditioning vent;
- » within 400mm of the blades of a ceiling fan.

There are special requirements for stairwells, sloping ceilings, and ceilings with exposed beams. Specific requirements are explained in the *Building Fire Safety Regulation 2008*.

If it is impracticable for the prescribed location requirements to be met, the owner may put the alarm at another location that will provide a warning to occupants of the dwelling. For example, a smoke alarm that is regularly activated by steam from a bathroom or smoke from fumes from a kitchen may be moved to another appropriate location.

2017 2022 2027

The staged approach

Existing dwellings

From 1 January 2017

- » All required smoke alarms that are replaced must be photoelectric and comply with AS3786-2014.
- » Existing smoke alarms manufactured more than 10 years ago must be replaced. (Note: Smoke alarms should have the date of manufacture stamped on them).
- » Smoke alarms that do not operate when tested must be replaced immediately.
- » Existing hardwired smoke alarms that need replacement must be replaced with hardwired smoke alarms.

Dwellings sold, leased or an existing lease renewed

From 1 January 2017

- » Requirements as for existing dwellings.
- » Existing landlord's and tenant's obligations regarding the installation and testing of smoke alarms continue.

From 1 January 2022

- » From this date, the new legislative requirements apply when a new lease for a dwelling starts, or an existing lease is renewed.

New dwellings and those being substantially renovated

From 1 January 2017

- » The development approval process for new dwellings and substantial renovations will ensure that applications for building works made after this date will bring dwellings into compliance with legislation.
- » For substantial renovations, a building certifier will determine the smoke alarm requirements as a part of the development approval process.

What else do I need to know?

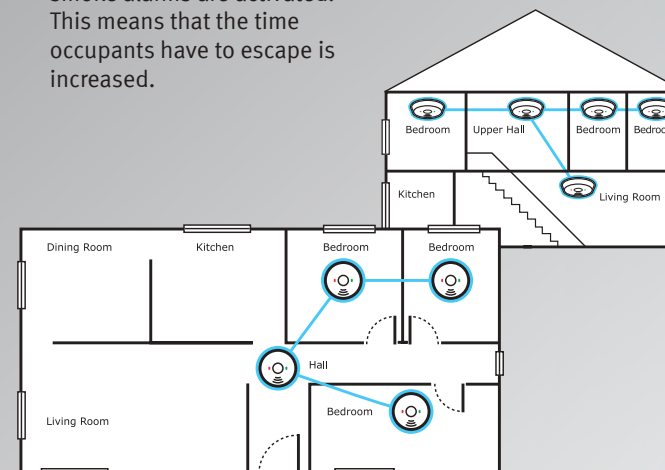
Instead of waking you, smoke and toxic gases from a fire can quickly numb your senses and put you into an even deeper sleep.

Photoelectric smoke alarms

Research by the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council indicates that photoelectric smoke alarms provide the best detection across a wider range of fires and are more likely to alert occupants in time to escape safely.

Interconnected

When one smoke alarm is activated, all interconnected smoke alarms are activated. This means that the time occupants have to escape is increased.



Unwanted activations

Some reasons that smoke alarms would activate for no apparent reason include:

1. They have a build-up of dust, insects or other particulates.
2. They are in the wrong location (e.g. too close to cooking fumes from the kitchen or steam from the shower).
3. They are near or past their ten year life.
4. The battery requires replacement.
5. If the alarm is hardwired:
 - there is an issue with how the alarm is installed ;
 - there is an issue with the power supply to the dwelling.

Smoke Alarm Certification

Smoke alarms compliant with the Australian Standard may, but are not required to, display these symbols.



Smoke alarms for the Deaf and hard of hearing community

QFES provides a subsidy scheme to assist people who are deaf or hard of hearing to purchase special smoke alarms. This initiative is managed by Deaf Services Queensland.

Email: smokealarms@deafsq.org.au

Phone: (07) 3892 8500

TTY: (07) 3892 8501



What about maintenance?

- Test smoke alarms once a month using the test button.
- Check that the battery is working once a month. A 'chirping' sound from the smoke alarm may indicate a flat battery. Replace batteries as required.
- Clean the grill of your smoke alarm once a month using a vacuum cleaner or soft brush (or as per the manufacturer's instructions).
- Do not hinder the device (e.g. smoke alarms must never be painted).
- If activated from cooking/steam, use the 'hush' button (if fitted) or disperse the smoke/steam (e.g. wave a towel near the alarm).
- All types of smoke alarms have a limited life-span and must be replaced every 10 years. Look for the year of manufacture sticker or stamp.

For more information

Additional information on smoke alarms is available at www.qfes.qld.gov.au/smokealarms/.