

Renting or Selling?

Mains Powered Smoke Alarms are now **law**

New smoke alarm regulations

It will be law for all residential properties to have mains powered smoke alarms installed from 1 October 2009. In dwellings where the construction of the building does not permit a space to conceal the wiring or where no mains power is available, smoke alarms with a 10 year battery life are permitted.

Under *Building Regulations Amendment 2009* an electrical contractor must install mains powered smoke alarms before a property is sold or a new rental lease agreement has been signed.

Rental properties have until 1 October 2011 to comply with the new regulations.

The *Building Regulations Amendment 2009* specifies where smoke alarms should be installed.

Class 1a buildings

(house, duplex, villa or town house)

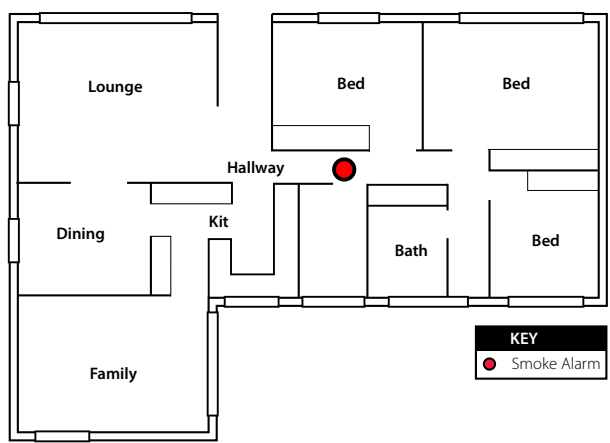
Class 2

(flat or apartment)

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)

Figure 1 – Class 1a and Class 2 buildings



Where there's smoke, there could be fire!

Fires can start quickly and without warning. A working smoke alarm can provide valuable minutes in identifying a fire, giving you more time to escape safely. FESA recommends a smoke alarm is also installed in each bedroom.

Smoke alarms are very sensitive and may detect smoke and moisture created by common household activities, such as burning toast or steam from a bathroom.

Smoke alarms should not be located near:

- Cooking appliances
- Heaters or fireplaces
- Doorways to bathrooms, laundries or other humid areas
- Heating and cooling duct outlets
- Ceiling fans, doors and windows (excessive air movement may prevent smoke from reaching the smoke alarm)
- Fluorescent light fittings (to avoid the effect of electrical 'noise' or 'flicker') or doorways and windows where barbecues and incinerators are located

Class 1b buildings

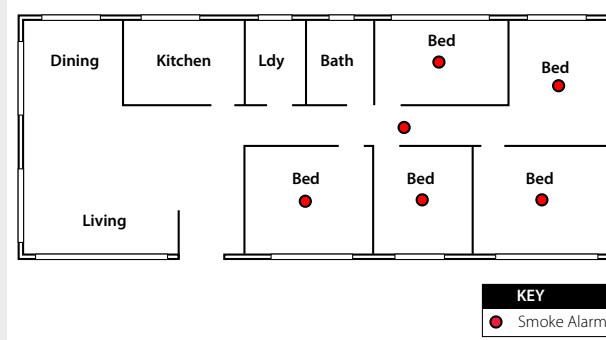
(boarding/guest house or hostel where up to 12 persons can reside)

In a Class 1b building, 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)

(Source: *Building Code of Australia, 2008 Volume 2*)

Figure 2 – Class 1b buildings



More information?

More information about smoke alarms is available from Building Code of Australia or the FESA Fact Sheet "Installing Smoke Alarms": www.fesa.wa.gov.au

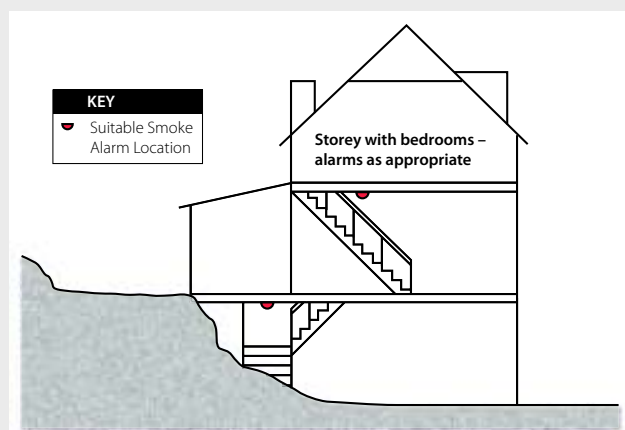
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Multilevel homes and properties

In addition to smoke alarms installed adjacent to sleeping areas, smoke alarms are also required in the corridor/ hallway occupants will use to evacuate. An alarm is required at each level of that exit path. For example if the bedrooms are on the first floor, then a smoke alarm should be positioned near the area of the interconnecting stair at ground level. This will ensure an alarm will be raised before smoke makes the exit path impassable.

Figure 3 – Multilevel homes and properties



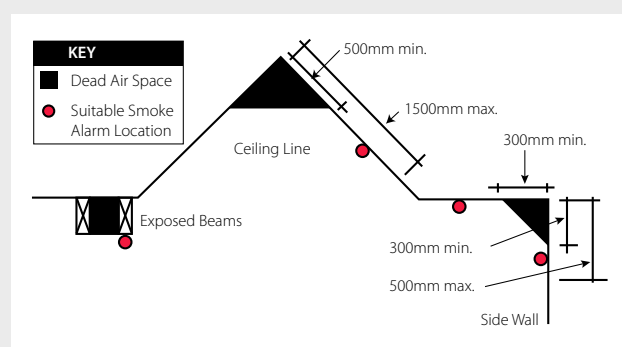
Installation of smoke alarms

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. The recommended position in this situation is between 300mm to 500mm below the ceiling. For cathedral ceilings, the recommended position should be between 500mm and 150mm from the apex to the top of the alarm.

Figure 4 – Installation of smoke alarms



How can I provide the maximum protection?

In addition to the minimum requirements the following measures can be considered:

Are bedroom doors closed?

When bedroom doors are closed, smoke flow will be impeded and smoke alarm activation time can be affected. In these circumstances, a smoke alarm should be considered in every bedroom where the door will be closed.

Interconnection of smoke alarms

Interconnection ensures that, regardless of where a fire starts, all smoke alarms in the dwelling will sound.

If the occupants sleep with the doors closed, interconnected smoke alarms are strongly recommended.

As children sleep more soundly than adults, if the childrens' sleeping area is protected by a different smoke alarm than the parents, interconnecting these alarms should be considered.

Which smoke alarm is best?

A mains powered photo electric smoke alarm is best with a fixed rechargeable battery that does not need to be changed for the life of the smoke alarm. This type of alarm can detect smoke faster and more types of smoke compared to older models. This means you will be alerted to a fire earlier giving you more time to escape safely. All smoke alarms should be installed in compliance with Australian Standards 3786 and must be changed every 10 years.

More information?

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