



Washington State Patrol • State Fire Marshal Chad Cross

*** For Immediate Release***

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Home Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarms

Olympia- Working smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms are one of the most effective ways to protect people in their homes from fire and toxic gas exposure. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) reports that nearly three out of five home fire deaths occur in homes with no smoke alarms or with alarms that are not working. In Washington State in 2024, 66 fatalities occurred where smoke alarms were not operational or installed, and two fatalities occurred from carbon monoxide exposure. Smoke alarms provide early warning, giving occupants critical time to escape, while carbon monoxide alarms alert residents to the presence of an invisible, odorless gas that can be deadly before symptoms are noticed. Together, these devices form a simple but essential layer of protection that saves lives every year when properly installed, maintained, and tested regularly.

The State Fire Marshal's Office recommends these safety tips:

- Install smoke alarms inside every bedroom and on every level of your home. Install carbon monoxide alarms outside sleeping areas and on each level of the home, especially near fuel-burning appliances.
- Interconnect smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms whenever possible so that when one sounds, all alarms alert occupants throughout the home.
- Ionization smoke alarms respond more quickly to flaming fires, while photoelectric alarms are more effective at detecting smoldering fires. Photoelectric alarms are especially well suited for areas near kitchens and bathrooms.
- Test all smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms at least once a month and replace batteries in battery-operated units when you change your clocks for daylight saving time.
- Smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms are typically designed to last up to 10 years. Replace them according to the manufacturer's instructions or sooner if they fail to operate properly.
- Never ignore a carbon monoxide alarm. If it sounds, move everyone outside to fresh air immediately and call 911 or your local fire department.
- If you live in rental housing, contact your landlord or property manager for assistance. Under state law (RCW 43.44.110, Smoke Detection Devices in Dwelling Units), all rental units must have working smoke alarms at the time of move-in, and carbon monoxide alarms are required in all residential buildings under RCW 19.27.530.

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