

Buying Smoke Alarms



What type of smoke alarm?

There is no single smoke alarm that operates best under all conditions.

When replacing your smoke alarms, choose **photoelectric** ones for inside your home. They are better at detecting slow, smouldering fires, which are how many home fires start.

Ionisation smoke alarms give early warnings for fast-flaming fires, like those that might start in your garage or workshop from sparks.

Heat alarms are less likely to go off by mistake, but they are slower to detect fires. They work by sensing a quick rise in temperature. Use them in places where smoke alarms might trigger false alarms because of dust, fumes, or high humidity, and where a smoke alarm isn't required by law.

If you're installing several smoke alarms and heat alarms, it's best to connect them so they all sound together if there's a fire. This usually needs a licensed electrician for the wiring. Some newer models connect wirelessly. Interconnection is required for homes built after 1 May 2015.

Mains-powered or battery-operated?

We recommend mains-powered and interconnected smoke alarms.

A mains-powered smoke alarm connects to your home's electricity and has back-up batteries to keep working during a power outage. As the smoke alarm has two power sources, they are far more reliable than alarms that use only batteries.

The next best choice is a smoke alarm with 10-year non-removable lithium batteries. These batteries do not need to be replaced each year.

Smoke alarms with a 9-volt alkaline battery have the lowest upfront costs but you will need to change the battery every year.



Mains-powered smoke alarm



10-year lithium battery alarm



9-volt alkaline battery smoke alarm

How many do I buy?

How many smoke alarms you need depends on the size and layout of your home.

We recommend you place a smoke alarm in every sleeping area, living room, hallway, stairway and garage to get the earliest warning of a fire.

In Western Australia, mains-powered smoke alarms must be installed on the ceiling in the hallway near sleeping areas. If there's no hallway, put them on the ceiling near the sleeping areas. In a multi-level home, smoke alarms are also required on other levels, even if they are for parking, bathrooms, or laundry rooms.

Where can I buy smoke alarms?

Battery-powered smoke alarms are available at most hardware stores. You can also find them at supermarkets and office supplies shops.

Mains-powered smoke alarms are available at most hardware and electrical supply stores. Remember, as the alarms connect to your home's electricity, a licensed electrician must install them.



Are there approved smoke alarms?

All smoke alarms installed in Western Australian homes must meet the requirements of Australian Standard AS 3786.

Smoke alarms for the deaf and hard of hearing

There are smoke alarms for people who are deaf or hard of hearing with a flashing light and a vibrating pad that can be placed under the pillow. These activate when the smoke alarm sounds and some can be interconnected with ordinary smoke alarms in different locations within your home. If one of the alarms senses smoke, all alarms will sound, the light will flash and the pad will vibrate.

Smoke alarms for older people and people with disability

It's a good idea to connect your smoke alarms to a personal alarm system. This way your personal alarm can automatically notify the monitoring company, so they can take immediate action based on the steps you've agreed upon in your home fire escape plan.



Interconnect your smoke alarms, so when one alarm detects a fire, all alarms sound.



Replace smoke alarms every 10 years.



Always use a licensed electrician when installing mains-powered smoke alarms.



Regularly maintain your smoke alarm. Test them monthly by pressing the test button until you hear the alarm sound. Vacuum them with a soft brush once a year to remove dust and cobwebs.

Readers should refer to [Building and Energy](#) for all legal requirements relating to smoke alarms. This publication is intended as a guide to assist Park Homes, Class 1a, Class 2 and Class 4 buildings, and is based on the position of the Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council. The State of Western Australia (via DFES) makes every attempt to ensure the accuracy and reliability of information contained in this publication. However, no guarantee is made as to the accuracy of the information provided. The WA Government and its servants and agents expressly disclaim any liability (including in negligence) for any act or omission resulting from the use of the information and for any consequences including any loss, damage, cost and expense arising from any such act or omission. APRIL/2025/V1.0