

Alterations to the New Zealand Building Code in April 2003 require smoke alarms be installed in all new homes and new additions and alterations to a home.

Clause F7 of the building code states: “Appropriate means of detection and warning of fire must be provided within each household unit.”

Smoke alarms are required in new homes but are not compulsory in existing homes unless:

- A building undergoes a change of use to become a home, e.g. turning a garage into a sleep out.
- An alteration is made to an existing home that requires a building consent.

The requirement to install smoke alarms applies to any alteration or addition to a home regardless of the nature of the work. This includes work such as decks attached to dwellings, log fires and plumbing. This means smoke alarms will need to be installed for the final inspection to enable a Code Compliance Certificate (CCC) to be issued.

This requirement to install smoke alarms is triggered when an application for a building consent is lodged with the council.

Why do you need to get a smoke alarm?

One of the aims of the building act is to improve household fire safety. For this reason the building act requires automatic smoke detection in areas that people sleep.

What will happen if you don't install a smoke alarm?

A CCC will not be issued if a smoke alarm has not been installed. A CCC is evidence that your building is safe and sanitary. Having no CCC could result in the bank not releasing the final payment for the building work and insurance companies may not provide cover.

How can you be sure that your smoke alarm is still working?

Like any safety feature in a building, it is recommended that smoke alarms are regularly maintained and tested.

Recommended maintenance procedures for a smoke alarm are:

- Annually cleaning the smoke alarm with a vacuum cleaner.
- Testing the smoke alarm every month.

What kind of smoke alarm do you need?

Smoke alarms may be battery powered and they do not need to be interconnected. They do need to have:

- A 60 seconds minimum hush facility. A hush facility is a button on the smoke alarm that silences the alarm for a limited time after it has been activated. This allows the cause of a nuisance alarm to be cleared without removing the battery to silence the smoke alarm, and
- An alarm test facility.

Smoke alarms need to meet prescribed standards, look for a smoke alarm that has at least one of the following symbols on the box.

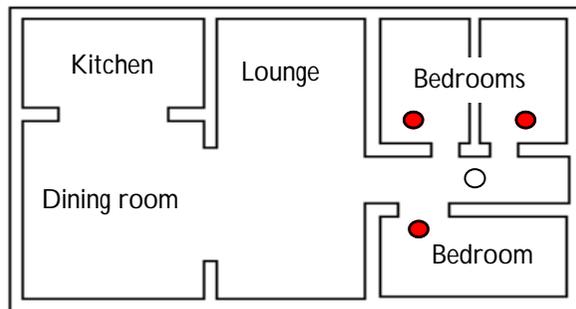


Smoke alarms

Where should smoke alarms be installed?

In order to meet building code requirements smoke alarms need to be installed on or near the ceiling:

- Within 3m of the door to every bedroom. Smoke alarms must be loud enough to wake sleeping occupants on the other side of the door.
- On every escape route such as stairs or a long passageway.



- Smoke alarm Optimum layout
- Smoke alarm Compliant layout

Having one smoke alarm in each bedroom offers superior protection.



For more information contact:

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Building act requirements

Whanganui District Council