

SMOKE ALARMS IN TENANCY UNITS

Under changes to the Residential Tenancies Act, every residential property being rented is required to have smoke alarms installed in accordance with the current building code requirements. This information sheet gives you a guideline as to how these should be installed and maintained.

NZBC clause F7 requires smoke alarms to be present,

- on each level of a multi-storey dwelling, AND
- within each sleeping space, OR
- within 3 m of every sleeping space and audible to the occupants, AND
- at the escape route from any bedroom. This includes top and bottom of stairs.

Alarms should be fitted to the ceiling – preferably at a high point on a sloping ceiling, but not closer than 200mm to the wall or to a large beam. Alternatively these can be wall-mounted, but should be no lower than 600mm down from, and not closer than 300mm to the ceiling. Detectors should be fitted away from kitchens and bathrooms to avoid nuisance alarms.

Smoke alarms are required to be fitted with a Hush facility which allows the detector to be silenced for a short period while the smoke is removed. Alarms are not required to be inter-connected, but this is wise in large buildings or multi-stored residences where the alarm may not be heard across the unit. Smoke Detectors wired to security-type alarm systems are acceptable however we recommend that they incorporate a unique tone which distinguishes the fire alarm from another emergency.

It is the owner's responsibility to supply and ensure working smoke alarms are installed. The tenant is responsible to replace batteries annually. Care should be taken when changing batteries, some devices have a clip or bracket that hangs out when the battery is in place, preventing you from putting the alarm back up without a battery. This will have to be put in place before installing the battery. Always test the alarm once you have the new battery in.

Smoke alarms should be tested regularly by the tenant by using the test switch on the unit to ensure they are operational



Photoelectronic smoke alarms are recommended by the NZ Fire Service. These detect visible particles and are different to Ionisation smoke alarms which detect products of combustion and can fail to detect some fires developing.

Most domestic smoke alarms have a lifespan of 10 years whereby they must be replaced. This is usually displayed on the back of the unit with a **Manufacture Date** or a **Replace By** date. Smoke alarms exceeding their recommended life should not be relied upon.



Westland Fire now stock a complying photoelectronic smoke alarm **with a 10-year battery** and hush facility compliant. This has a sealed battery to prevent removal by a tenant and can be easily fitted and do not need to be changed for the life of the detector.