



Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service

Fire Prevention Branch

Smoke Alarms in Rental Units

The City of Winnipeg has established standards and requirements for smoke alarms in residential rental properties.

These include requirements for testing, maintenance, record keeping and tenant / owner education for smoke alarms.

Owners of residential rental units will be required to test smoke alarms annually and keep records of the tests for review by Fire Inspectors. They will also be required to provide information to renters about the owner's obligations with respect to smoke alarms in the units.

➤ **What smoke alarms are acceptable?**

An acceptable smoke alarm is sealed and has a permanent connection to an electrical circuit with no disruption between the over-current device and the smoke alarm or is one that is powered by a non-removable ten-year lithium battery. It is required to be approved by the Fire Paramedic Service.

➤ **Who is responsible for installing a smoke alarm?**

The owner or owner's representative or the property manager is responsible for the installation of all smoke alarms.

➤ **How many smoke alarms should I have?**

A minimum of one acceptable smoke alarm must be installed and maintained in every residential rental unit. Additional smoke alarms may be required depending on sleeping room locations.

➤ **What about false alarms?**

Any smoke alarm that is located in a residential rental unit that consists of a single room or that is located within ten feet of the entrance to a bathroom or within ten feet of a cooking area or within ten feet of a cooking appliance in a motel or hotel room must be equipped with a pause, hush, silencer or false alarm control feature.

➤ **What if my smoke alarm repeatedly "false alarms"?**

Where a smoke alarm has been damaged, tampered with, destroyed, disconnected or removed or has actuated false alarms on two or more occasions within a twelve-month period, the Fire Paramedic Service may require the installation of an acceptable photoelectric smoke alarm.

➤ **Can an "old" hard-wired smoke alarm be replaced with a "new" ten-year lithium battery alarm?**

An owner of a residential rental unit must not replace an approved smoke alarm that has a permanent connection to an electrical circuit with a smoke alarm powered by any other source.

➤ **Can I remove a smoke alarm?**

Except to repair or replace it, no person shall damage, tamper with, destroy, disconnect or remove an approved smoke alarm after it has been installed.

➤ **What are my obligations as a tenant?**

A tenant must never tamper with a smoke alarm. It's against the law and you can be charged and / or fined under the Fire Prevention bylaw. Also, your landlord can give you as little as five days' notice to move if you are caught tampering with a smoke alarm.

➤ **What about my landlord's obligations?**

- Your landlord must ensure that your smoke alarm is always working. He / she must test and clean your smoke alarm(s) at least once a year.
- Your landlord must also test the smoke alarm whenever a new tenant moves in and replace a smoke alarm that is not working properly within 24 hours of being notified or finding out about it. It is also the landlord's responsibility to report smoke alarm or life safety system tampering to the City of Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service Fire Prevention Branch.
- A Smoke Alarm Log is a requirement as it documents when a smoke alarm is installed, tested, or when a new tenant occupies a property. It is recommended to have a tenant sign the document acknowledging its operation. This document may assist a landlord if a smoke alarm is removed. A Fire Inspector may request the log for review.
- Advise your landlord or caretaker immediately, if your smoke alarm is not operating. Record the time and date it was reported, as this may be requested by a Fire Inspector.
- Contact the City of Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service, Fire Prevention Branch at 204-986-8200 if smoke alarm is not repaired or replaced within 24 hours.
- Ask your caretaker how to test the smoke alarm (hard wired or battery powered). Test smoke alarms monthly and record test date. When test button activated, smoke alarm unit will alarm. If smoke alarms are interconnected, all smoke alarms will alarm. Hard wired units have a power indicator light.
- Ask caretaker to instruct pause / silence / hush button use, if smoke alarm unit has one. This button may temporarily silence an alarm for nuisance smoke / steam conditions. The smoke alarm will reset after a few moments.
- Caretaker contact information should be provided to tenants. Landlords or caretakers may request your signature noting an operating smoke alarm at a specific test date. These dates may include when first occupying a suite, when an alarm is replaced or during an annual test. This smoke alarm log is kept with the caretaker documenting the smoke alarm installation and operation.

➤ **Do I really require a smoke alarm?**

YES! Smoke alarms are mandatory in all residential occupancies and dwelling units. The owner must ensure that all smoke alarms are installed and maintained in accordance with the most recent edition of the "Standard for the Installation of Smoke-Alarms," published by the Underwriters' Laboratories of Canada and approved by the Standards Council of Canada.

Contact the **Fire Prevention Branch** if there are further smoke alarm questions. The **Residential Tenancies Branch** may be contacted at **204-945-2476**.

**Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service
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