



# Smoke Alarms in Rentals

A Factsheet on Requirements for Rental Properties

Roughly 70 percent of home fire deaths result from fires in homes with no working smoke alarms. Smoke alarms are one of the great safety success stories of the 20th century - but only when they're working properly. The following factsheet explains the requirements for smoke alarms in rental properties.

## Do You Rent & Need a Smoke Alarm?

Whether you live in a rented house or apartment, your landlord is required to provide you with a working smoke alarm.

## Responsibilities of Landlords

- Install working smoke alarms as required by code and following the manufacturers instructions.
- All smoke alarms should carry the approval of Underwriters Laboratories (UL) or Factory Mutual (FM) Testing Laboratories.
- Inspect and test alarms when a unit becomes vacant. Smoke alarms should be repaired or replaced before the rental unit is reoccupied.
- Instruct tenants on the purpose, operation and maintenance of the devices. Provide written notice to tenants describing their responsibility to maintain smoke alarms.

## Responsibilities of Tenants

- Maintain smoke alarms in good working order. This

involves testing the detector monthly according to the manufacturer's instructions, as well as regularly cleaning the alarm with a vacuum.

- If the smoke alarm is battery operated (9 volt), the tenant is responsible for replacing the battery once each year using the battery type listed on the alarm.
- Caution: If you live in an apartment building with wired-in smoke alarms, check with your landlord for correct testing and maintenance procedures.

Inform your landlord of this legal requirement by showing him/her this information. Ask your landlord to supply you with the necessary smoke alarms as soon as possible. If you live in the City of Tacoma, call 253.591.5740 if an approved and operable smoke alarm is not provided upon request.

You can also call the Washington State Attorney General's Office Consumer Line at 1-800-692-5086. You can either talk to an operator or listen to recorded messages.

The following citations are references to smoke alarm requirements in rental occupancies:

- **Washington State Law**  
RCW 48.48.140
- **International Fire Code**  
Section 907

## For More Information

### Contact:

**Tacoma Fire Department  
Public Education Office  
253.591.5740**

[www.tacomafiredepartment.org](http://www.tacomafiredepartment.org)