



CRANBROOK FIRE & EMERGENCY SERVICES

INFORMATION BULLETIN

FIRE SAFETY IN YOUR HOME

Cranbrook Fire & Emergency Services would like to take this opportunity to inform residents of the importance of fire safety. In British Columbia there are on average 36.2 deaths due to fire per year. 93% of these deaths occur in structures. Those of us who work in the Fire service believe wholeheartedly that many of these deaths can be prevented if you follow these fire-safe practices:

- Smoke detectors should be installed in every sleeping room and on every level of the home including the basement
- Smoke detectors should be tested monthly
- New batteries should be installed in smoke detectors twice per year, each time you change your clocks for daylight savings time
- Smoke detectors older than ten (10) years old should be replaced
- Fire Escape plans must be carefully planned and routinely practiced for them to be effective. Every member should practice their fire escape plan twice a year and should know at least two exits from every room.
- When exiting a building that is involved in a fire, occupants must remain low to the floor to avoid inhaling toxic smoke and superheated gases that are released by fire
- A meeting place should be pre-determined outside the home, and arrangements should be made to use a neighbor's phone in case of a fire.
- The highest percentage of home fires start in the kitchen. Never leave cooking unattended, and keep your cooking surface clean to prevent accidental fires in the kitchen.

SMOKE DETECTORS IN THE HOME

Installing smoke detectors in your home is a relatively easy process. However, there are still a few guidelines to follow to ensure that your smoke detectors are as effective as possible. Always follow the manufacturer's directions when installing a smoke detector as the instructions will be geared toward your specific model.

Number of smoke detectors. Determine how many smoke detectors you'll need. Typically you'll need one smoke detector for each bedroom in the house, one smoke detector for each additional level of your house (including the basement) and one for any other large room you and your family spend lots of time in (i.e. the dining room or family room). Any long hallways or other isolated areas of the house may require a smoke detector as well. You will not need to place a smoke detector in the kitchen.

Purchase your smoke detectors. First and foremost, make sure that an independent testing laboratory approves the smoke detectors you buy. Next you'll have to choose what type of smoke detector to purchase. You can choose between battery-powered, plug-in and hard-wired smoke detectors. A battery-powered smoke detector is the most common option. Simply add some batteries, affix the detector to the wall or ceiling and you're done. You will have to keep an eye on your detector though, if the batteries run out it obviously won't work. Your battery-powered smoke detector will typically beep at you if the battery power is low, so you should have ample warning when it's time to change the batteries. Your batteries should be changed each time you change your clocks with Daylight Savings Time changes, to ensure that they're in working order.

Other smoke detector options do not require a battery. If you opt for a plug-in smoke detector, you'll need to ensure that the plug is secure in the wall and cannot be inadvertently removed. If you opt to hard-wire your smoke detectors into your home's electrical system, ensure that they're installed by a qualified electrician.

Choose appropriate locations for your smoke detectors. As mentioned above, you should not place a smoke detector in your kitchen. Smoke from cooking could cause your smoke detector to go off on a regular basis. You should place smoke detectors inside each bedroom. You should also place at least one smoke detector on every level of your home and in any additional room that your family regularly spends time in. Consider placing a smoke detector in your garage as well. There are often highly flammable objects in the garage and a strategically placed smoke detector will alert you immediately should anything catch fire.

When you get ready to install your smoke detectors, you should mount them high on the wall, at least 4" to 12" from the ceiling and away from any corners. If possible, you should mount your smoke detectors directly on the ceiling, at least 4" away from any walls. Since smoke rises, it is important to place your smoke detectors high up, so as to be alerted to the first signs of smoke. If you have an angular roof, you should place your smoke detector on or near the roof's highest point.

Avoid placing your smoke detectors near any doors or windows. Drafty locations could blow the smoke away from the smoke detector and prevent it from doing its job.

When mounting a smoke detector in the basement, mount it high on the wall or on the ceiling, as mentioned above. Place the smoke detector near the stairway, but not in any dead airspace. In other words, make sure that smoke from anywhere in the basement will reach the detector.

Install your smoke detectors. Each smoke detector is different, so make sure to consult your manufacturer's instructions before mounting your detector. However, most smoke detectors are easy to mount and simply require a drill and a screwdriver. Once you decide where you want your smoke detector to go, simply measure the distance between the holes in the detector, drill holes in the ceiling at that same distance, then use screws to attach the smoke detector to the wall or ceiling. As mentioned above, if you're using a plug-in smoke detector, make sure to secure the plug into the socket; if you're installing a hard-wired smoke detector into your home's electrical system, enlist the help of a qualified electrician.

Maintain your smoke detector. Always ensure that your smoke detectors are in working order. Walk through your house and test your smoke detectors once a month. You can usually push a button on the outside of the smoke detector that will let off a loud beep if your smoke detector is in working order. Check your instruction manual to make sure you're testing your smoke detector correctly.

You should change the batteries in all your smoke detectors if they are battery-powered and test them twice a year. The most convenient method of remembering is to do this every time you change your clocks for Daylight Savings Time. At this time you should also clean your smoke detector to ensure they're in good operating condition.

You bought these smoke detectors for your family's safety. If you install them correctly and maintain them properly they could turn out to be the best investment you've ever made.

For further information or if you have any questions please feel free to contact Cranbrook Fire & Emergency Services at 250-426-2325 or stop by and visit us at 37-11th Ave South in Cranbrook.

**Develop a home fire escape plan today.....
It could save your life tonight!**

If a fire occurred in your home tonight, would your family get out safely? Everyone must know what to do and where to go when the smoke alarm sounds. Take a few minutes with everyone in your household to make a home fire escape plan, following the instructions below.

1. Draw a floor plan of your home.

Use the grid on the back to draw a floor plan of your home. You should draw a plan for each level of your home.

2. Include all possible emergency exits.

Draw in all the doors, windows and stairways. This will show you and your family all possible escape routes at a glance. Include any features, such as the roof of a garage or porch that would help in your escape.

3. Show two ways out of every room, if possible.

The door will be the main exit from each room. However, if the door is blocked by smoke or fire, identify an alternate escape route, which could be a window. Make sure that all windows can open easily and that everyone knows how to escape through them to safety. If windows have security bars, equip them with quick-releasing devices.

4. Does anyone need help to escape?

Decide in advance who will assist the very young, older adults or people with disabilities in your household. A few minutes of planning will save valuable seconds in a real emergency.

5. Choose a meeting place outside.

Choose a meeting place a safe distance from your home that everyone will remember. A tree, street light or a neighbor's home are all good choices. In case of fire, everyone will go directly to this meeting place so they can be accounted for.

6. Call the fire department from outside your home.

Don't waste valuable seconds calling the fire department from inside your home. Once you have safely escaped, call the fire department from a cell phone or a neighbor's home.

7. Practice your escape.

Review the plan with everyone in your household. Walk through the escape routes for each room with the entire family. Use this walk-through exercise to check your escape routes, making sure all exits are practical and easy to use. Then hold a fire drill twice a year and time how long it takes. In a real fire, you must react without hesitation as your escape routes may be quickly blocked by smoke or flames.

Remember:

- **Plan two ways out of every room, if possible.**
- **Hold a fire drill twice a year.**
- **Install smoke alarms on every level of your home and outside all sleeping areas.**

If you live in a high-rise apartment building, contact the building management for information on your building's fire safety plan.

