

# Is your Family **Safe**?

## Frequently Asked Building and Housing Code Questions.

- Smoke Detectors
  - Deadbolts
  - Garage, Attics, and Basements
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A fire in your home is a frightening thought. Can I escape? Can I help the ones I love in an emergency? These are concerns we all have. The Code Enforcement Division has compiled the following questions that are most frequently asked regarding Building and Housing code requirements and how to best protect the ones you love. Please take a few minutes to read through the sections below.

### ***Why is a smoke detector important?***

Smoke detectors give you and your loved ones critical seconds to escape a burning building by sounding an alarm at the presence of smoke. The old saying, "where there's smoke there's fire" is true. An early warning of smoke in the house is critical because you can become asphyxiated very quickly by breathing smoke and would be unable to escape or help your loved ones. The seconds provided by the smoke detector's alarm could mean the difference between life and death. Your chances of surviving a fire are two times better when a smoke detector is present.

### ***How many smoke detectors do I need to have?***

Each building was required to meet the Building Code standard in the year it was built. All dwelling units must have at least one smoke detector. Current law, and the safest and most effective use of smoke detectors, requires one in each sleeping room and in the hallway area just outside the sleeping rooms.

### ***If I am a tenant, is it my responsibility or my landlord's to ensure the smoke detector is working?***

It is the landlord's responsibility to ensure there is a properly functioning smoke detector when you move in. After that, the tenant is responsible for regularly checking the smoke detector battery. If you live in a single family home, duplex or a mobile home, you are responsible for maintaining the smoke detector in proper working order. In apartments and all other dwellings, if the battery is dead or there is any other defect in the smoke detector, the owner must make the repairs or replace the faulty smoke upon written notice of the condition from the tenant.

### ***The smoke detector keeps going off every time I cook or shower. Is it O.K. to take the battery out?***

NO. Never take the battery out of the smoke detector. It may be located too close to a cooking area or the bathroom. The most common cause of "false alarms" is lack of ventilation. The fact is opening a window while cooking or turning on the exhaust fan while bathing or showering can prevent most false alarms.

***I can't remember to check my smoke detector. Do you have any tips?***

Yes. The easiest way to remember to check to ensure the smoke detector is working is to make a habit of checking it when you change the clocks in the spring and fall. Another good way is to check them on your family birthdays or around the holiday seasons. If you haven't checked the smoke detector in your home in a while, check it now while you're thinking of it. Smoke detectors do save lives.

***I am concerned about safety in my neighborhood, what kind of deadbolts can I install on my door?***

The Uniform Building Code requires that deadbolts must be open able from the inside without a key or any special knowledge. Deadbolts with a latch on the inside are the ones approved for residential use.

***Where should the deadbolt be installed?***

The deadbolt should be installed no higher than 48" from the finished floor.

***My door has a window in it. Can I install a double-sided key deadbolt for security reasons?***

**NO.** A two-sided keyed deadbolt may stop a burglar from removing your property but it also will prevent you from escaping your house in the case of fire or other emergency.

***What if I left the key in the lock?***

Most people remove the key from the lock. You probably would not be able to locate the key in an emergency situation especially if it is dark and the house is filled with smoke. If you leave the key in the lock, someone could break the window, steal the key and have access to your home. Even worse, during a fire the temperatures get extreme and the key could warp inside the lock and you would not be able turn it or touch it to escape.

***Can I install a two-keyed deadbolt on a security door?***

**NO.** For the same reasons you would not be able to install one on the exit doors, the security door deadbolt must be open able from the inside without a key or any special knowledge.

***Is it safe to live in a garage, attic or basement?***

**NO.** Garages, attics and basements are not designed to be lived in and are extremely dangerous to occupy. It is only safe and legal to live in a garage, attic or basement that has been legally converted to a habitable room with Building permits.

If you have question as to whether your home is legal and safe, please phone the Code Enforcement Division at 549-5753.

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