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2015-01	Smoke Alarm Device Requirements in Dwellings			January 16, 2015
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Informational Bulletin 2015-01
Smoke Alarm Device Requirements in Dwellings

Purpose:

The purpose of the bulletin is to provide information as to the current requirements for smoke alarms in single-family dwellings as well as multi-unit dwellings and rental units.

Definitions:

Automatic fire warning device - means a wall or ceiling mounted assembly containing an ionization chamber or photoelectric type of smoke detector, control equipment, and audible alarm in one unit which detects visible or invisible particles of combustion and which, upon detection of smoke, activates the alarm.

Building - means any structure, framework or housing, public or private, excluding single-family dwellings and multi-unit dwellings as defined, but including tanks, receptacles and containers for the storage of commodities or other materials.

Multi-unit Dwelling - means any structure not defined above as a building, which contains two or more single units which provide permanent or transient living facilities which may or may not include cooking and eating facilities, for one or more persons. This term shall include but not be limited to: rooming houses, dormitories, motels, hotels, apartment buildings, buildings which contain condominium units, duplexes, and houses; provided, however, that such buildings contain two or more units.

Rental Unit - means any residential unit in a building or single-family dwelling, which provides permanent or transient living facilities for one or more persons, which is occupied by tenants on a rental basis. This term shall include but not be limited to: hotels, motels, dormitories, apartments, duplex units, rooms rented out of the home of another, and single-family dwellings, so long as they are rented.

Single-Family Dwelling - means any structure not defined above as a building which contains one dwelling unit, which is designed to be occupied for living purposes, and which is used by one, two or more families exclusively as a home.

Substantially Rehabilitated - means any improvement to a building or single-family dwelling, which is valued at an amount greater than 1/2 of the assessed valuation of the building or dwelling. Please note this amount is based on the assessed value not the resale value.

1.) SINGLE-FAMILY DWELLINGS

When They Are Required:

Smoke alarms shall be installed in all single-family dwellings. (1)(2)

Locations of Installation:

Smoke alarms shall be installed in the following locations:

- (1) In each sleeping room.
- (2) Outside of each separate sleeping area in the immediate vicinity of the bedrooms.
- (3) On each additional story of the dwelling, including basements but not including crawl spaces and uninhabitable attics. In dwellings or dwelling units with split-levels and without an intervening door between the adjacent levels, a smoke alarm installed on the upper level shall suffice for the adjacent lower level provided that the lower level is less than one full story below the upper level. (1)(2)

Powering the Detectors:

New Construction:

Smoke alarms shall receive their primary power from the building's wiring (hardwired) and when the primary power is interrupted shall receive power from a battery (battery backup). (1)

Existing with Alterations, Repairs and Additions:

When there are alterations, repairs and additions requiring a permit or when one or more sleeping rooms are added, the individual dwelling unit shall be equipped with new smoke alarms located as required for new dwellings. (1)

Exceptions to Existing with Alterations, Repairs and Additions

1. Hardwiring of smoke alarms in existing areas shall not be required where the alterations or repairs do not result in the removal of interior wall or ceiling finishes exposing the structure, unless there is an attic, crawl space or basement available which could provide access for hard wiring without the removal of interior finishes. (1)
2. Work involving the exterior surface of the dwellings, such as the replacement of roofing or siding, or the addition or replacement of windows or doors, or the addition of a porch or deck. (1)

Existing:

In existing single-family dwellings, approved smoke alarms powered by batteries shall be permitted. Please check with the local Authority Having Jurisdiction in reference to which smoke alarms and batteries are approved. (2)

2.) MULTI-UNIT DWELLINGS AND RENTAL UNITS

When They Are Required:

Multi-unit dwellings and rental units shall be equipped with automatic fire warning devices. (3)

Locations of Installation:

Smoke alarms shall be installed in the following locations:

- (1) On the ceiling or wall outside of each separate sleeping area in the immediate vicinity of the bedrooms.
- (2) In each room used for sleeping purposes.
- (3) In each story within a dwelling unit, including basements but not including crawl spaces and uninhabitable attics. In dwellings or dwelling units with split-levels and without an intervening door between the adjacent levels, a smoke alarm installed on the upper level shall suffice for the adjacent lower level provided that the lower level is less than one full story below the upper level. (4)

Powering the Detectors:

New and Existing Construction:

All automatic fire warning devices in multi-unit dwellings, and all rental units shall be powered by the house electrical service (hardwired.) (5)

Required Interconnection of the Detectors:

New Construction and Existing Construction:

When more than one smoke alarm is required to be installed within an individual dwelling unit or sleeping unit the smoke alarms shall be interconnected in such a manner that the activation of one alarm will activate all of the alarms in the individual unit. The alarm shall be clearly audible in all bedrooms with all intervening doors closed and also taking into account any ambient noise. Interconnection within the unit is required, not within the building. Wireless interconnection systems are permitted. (4)(6)

3.) GENERAL REQUIREMENTS (BOTH SINGLE-FAMILY AND MULTI-FAMILY DWELLINGS)

Combination Smoke/Carbon Monoxide Devices: (Single, Multi and Rentals)

Combination devices are permitted provided that they meet the requirements of UL 217 and UL2034. (1)

Interconnected and combination devices must be compatible with all of the other devices connected to that system/circuit. (5)

Please note: Some combination devices utilize ionization type smoke detection. If photo-electric type detection is required then an ionization combination detector may not be code compliant.

Maintenance of Devices Required: (Single-Family, Multi-Unit and Rentals)

The owner of the rental unit shall be responsible for maintaining the automatic fire warning device in a suitable condition. (3)

References:

- (1) International Residential Code 2009 Edition, section R 314.
- (2) NFPA 101 Life Safety Code 2009 Edition, Ch. 24.3.4.
- (3) NH Fire Laws Annotated 153:10-a.
- (4) International Building Code 2009 Edition, section 907.2.11.
- (5) NH Administrative Rules, State Fire Code, Chapter Saf-C 6015.
- (6) NFPA 1 Fire Code 2009 Edition, Ch. 13.7.1.4.9.