

SMOKE ALARMS

RENTERS' RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

As a renter, you have the right to live in a home with working smoke alarms. You also have a responsibility to help keep them working.



Need help or more information?

If you're unsure about smoke alarms or need repairs:



- Contact your rental provider or property manager
- Visit consumer.vic.gov.au/smokealarms for renter advice and support

Why smoke alarms matter

- Smoke alarms provide **early warning of fire, allowing you time to escape.**
- You are more likely to die in a house fire if you don't have working smoke alarms.
- Fire services recommend additional smoke alarms in all bedrooms and living areas.

Ask your rental provider to install extra smoke alarms in bedrooms and living areas. While they don't have to agree, it doesn't hurt to ask.

Your rights

- You have the **right to working smoke alarms** in required areas of your home.
- Smoke alarms are treated as an **urgent repair** under the Residential Tenancies Act 1997.
- If smoke alarms are missing, faulty, or incorrectly located, you can **ask your rental provider or property manager to fix this promptly.**
- If an urgent repair isn't fixed immediately, you may be able to **arrange repairs yourself (up to \$2,500)** and be **reimbursed within seven days.**

Your responsibilities

- **Notify your rental provider immediately** if a smoke alarm is not working.
- **Never disconnect, remove, cover or interfere** with a smoke alarm.
- Report any faults or maintenance issues as soon as they arise.

Interfering with a smoke alarm is a **breach of duty** and may result in a formal notice. Fire services strongly encourage renters to test their smoke alarms monthly

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RENTAL PROVIDERS' LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES

As a rental provider, ensuring smoke alarms are correctly installed and maintained is not only a legal requirement, but a vital role in protecting the occupants and your investment property.

Your legal obligations

You must ensure:

- **Working smoke alarms** are installed in all legally required locations.
- Smoke alarms are **correctly installed and operational** at the start of every tenancy.
- Alarms are **maintained, tested and repaired** as required.

Smoke alarm faults are considered **urgent repairs** under the Residential Tenancies Act 1997.

Ongoing responsibilities

Under the Residential Tenancies Act you must:

- Test smoke alarms **at least once every 12 months**.
- Replace batteries when required (including back up batteries).
- **Repair or replace faulty alarms immediately**.
- Provide renters with written information about:
 - how each smoke alarm works
 - how to test alarms
 - their obligation not to tamper with alarms and to report faults

If you cannot be contacted or repairs are delayed, renters may authorise urgent repairs (up to \$2,500) and **must be reimbursed within seven days**.

Need help or more information?

- Speak with your property manager
- Visit consumer.vic.gov.au/smokealarms for detailed guidance
- Visit www.cfa.vic.gov.au and www.frv.vic.gov.au



Installation requirements

By law:

- At least **one smoke alarm must be installed on each level** of the property.
- Smoke alarms must be located **between each sleeping area and the rest of the home**.

Homes constructed or renovated:

Before 1 August 1997

- Minimum: working smoke alarms (9V battery allowed).
- Recommendation: interconnected alarms with 10-year batteries.

After 1 August 1997

- Must be **hardwired to mains power** with back-up battery.

After 1 May 2014

- Must be **hardwired to mains power, interconnected**, with back-up battery.

Large multi-unit buildings may have different fire system requirements according to the Building Code of Australia

Best practice recommendations

In addition to the minimum installation requirements, Victorian fire services strongly recommend:

- Installing smoke alarms in **every bedroom and living area**. Most fatal fires occur at night — the smoke alarm in the hallway may not sound if the bedroom door is closed.
- Using **interconnected smoke alarms** so all alarms sound together.
- Choosing alarms with a **10-year, long-life battery** to reduce maintenance.