



Superior Fire Department

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Smoke Detectors In Residential Rental Properties

Nine volt battery operated smoke detectors, which are commonly found in the majority of residential properties, are often found disabled by the fire department's fire inspectors and by fire department personnel who are responding to fires in these structures. This poses a very serious safety hazard to the occupants of these buildings. An ordinance enacted by the Superior City Council at its December 20, 2005 meeting will make for a much higher degree of safety for these residents and make it much more likely that they will receive early warning in the event of a fire in their homes.

Which Properties Are Affected by the 2005 Smoke Detector Ordinance? This change in the ordinance will apply to residential rental occupancies regardless of the number of units in the building. A residential rental occupancy is any single or multi-family dwelling which is not owner occupied or is not occupied by the property owner's next of kin.

Will 9 Volt Battery Operated Smoke Detectors Continue to Meet the Requirements of the Code? Standard 9 Volt Detectors may continue to be used in residential rental occupancies until January 1, 2008. By that date, they must be replaced with code-compliant detectors.

Which Detectors Will Meet the Requirements of the New Code? There are only two types of smoke detectors that will be code-compliant after January 1, 2008.

- They must be hard-wired to the building's electrical system at the electrical panel. Or
- They must be powered by a non-replaceable battery capable of powering the device for

a minimum of ten years without replacement.

What About the Back-up Batteries in Hard-wired Detectors? The back-up batteries in hard-wired detectors which are intended to provide power to the detector whenever there is a power outage will not be required to be of the variety that will last ten years. They may be of the standard 9 Volt variety. They need not be replaced every year, but must be replaced on the schedule recommended by the detector's manufacturer or when a new tenant moves into the unit, whichever comes first. Additionally, anytime that the back-up battery is low on power and is no longer capable of powering the detector, it must be replaced.

Isn't my building grandfathered in? The smoke detector ordinance is what is referred to as a retroactive code. This means that it applies to all properties whether they are existing buildings, newly constructed buildings, or newly remodeled buildings.

How Does This New Requirement Affect the Other Requirements of the Smoke Detector Ordinance? All other requirements of the municipal smoke detector ordinance remain unchanged by the 2005 revisions. The requirements of the smoke detector ordinance may viewed on line at the City of Superior Code of Ordinances website at:

<http://www.municode.com/resources/gateway.asp?pid=13990&sid=49>

The smoke detector ordinance is Chapter 54, Article III.

Where Do I Need to Have Smoke Detectors Installed? There must be a smoke detector installed at each of the following locations:

- There must be one on each floor with the exception of an unoccupied attic space.
- There must be one at the head of every stairway.
- There must be one in each sleeping area.
- There must be one in every bedroom.

One smoke detector may be used to fulfill more than one of the requirements listed above. For example, a single detector could be used at the top of the stairs in a second floor hallway to meet the requirement for the top of the stairway, the sleeping area and the second floor.

How Are the Smoke Detectors to Be Installed? Smoke detectors should always be installed according to the manufacturer's instructions that should be enclosed in the package for the smoke detector. If installed in a different manner, the detector could fail to operate when needed. Generally speaking, a detector mounted on the ceiling should never be mounted closer than 4" from any wall. Additionally, no detector should be mounted on a wall with its top edge closer than 4" from the ceiling and with its bottom edge more than 12" from the ceiling.

What If There Is a Retail Business Or Office in the Same Building? In cases where a commercial occupancy occupies the same building as a residential occupancy, an interconnected alarm system must be installed that would sound an alarm in the residential occupancy in the event of a fire in the business. In this case, additional detectors are required in the business, in the furnace room, in any attached garage area, and in other areas. If this situation applies to your property, please contact the Superior Fire Department for additional information.

If you have any questions regarding the requirements of this code as it applies to your business, please feel free to contact one of the fire inspectors at 715-395-1680 or email firedept4@ci.superior.wi.us