

## Monitored Residential Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarms



### How to maintain

- Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms should be maintained and cleaned according to manufacturers' instructions. Instructions are included in the package or can be found on the internet.
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms at least once a month using the test button.
- Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms with non-replaceable 10-year batteries are designed to remain effective for up to 10 years. If the alarm chirps, warning that the battery is low, replace the entire alarm right away.
- Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms with any other type of battery need a new battery at least twice a year. If that alarm chirps, warning the battery is low, replace the battery right away.
- Ask your monitoring company to call you to confirm an alarm prior to calling fire dispatch.

### Why are False Alarm a Problem?

Put simply, false alarms can cost lives.

Not only do they use firefighters' time and delay their attendance to real fires or medical emergencies, but they can also cause people to become complacent and not react upon hearing the alarm sound. Fatalities have been caused by people believing that it was "just another false alarm" and failing to evacuate in the event of actual danger.

When a fire or dangerous build-up of carbon monoxide occurs, every second counts and any delay in evacuation can result in tragedy.

### What can cause a Residential False Alarm?

- Alarm cover or sensor chamber is covered by dust or dirt
- Insects blocking or clogging the alarm's sensor chamber
- An interconnected alarm system is being triggered from another part of the home
- Power interruptions to smoke alarms due to loose wires, etc.
- Other appliances are on the same circuit as the alarms
- When a furnace is turned on for the first time
- Humidity
- The alarm is located near cold air returns

- Smoke alarm installed too close to kitchen, bathroom, laundry, ceiling fan, or fuel burning appliances

## Why does my alarm keep beeping?

When your smoke or carbon monoxide alarm makes a chirping noise, it's trying to tell you something is wrong. The worst thing you can do is disable or remove the alarm when it starts chirping. Some common causes of chirping include:

- The battery pull tab is still in the alarm
- The battery drawer is open
- The battery is low and needs replacing
- The battery is present but the contacts are corroded or obstructed

## Enforcement

Since reaching an all time high of 1,700 annual unwanted nuisance alarms in previous years, the Vancouver Fire Department has been proactively enforcing the Vancouver Municipal Code to educate and motivate fire alarm system owners to reduce or eliminate preventable unwanted nuisance alarm.

Failing to correct preventable false alarms can result in civil fire code violations starting at \$500 in accordance with Vancouver Municipal Code Title 22 and Title 16.

For additional information please contact the Vancouver Fire Marshal at [vanfmo@cityofvancouver.us](mailto:vanfmo@cityofvancouver.us) or call (360) 487-7260 or TTY: 711