



Dear Parent,

Today your child participated in a safety lesson presented by the Mt. Lebanon Fire Department. It was part of an overall curriculum on fire and life safety that is offered to all students in the kindergarten through fifth grade. This program is the most extensive of its kind in Pennsylvania.

The lesson today discussed how crucial working smoke detectors are in the home, how they work, and where to place them. The current recommendations are as follows:

1. A working smoke detector should be installed in every bedroom or area where someone sleeps.
2. An additional working smoke detector should be installed on each floor.
3. Apartments and one-story homes should have one by the front of the residence and in the rear area of the home, in addition to each bedroom.
4. Smoke detectors should be tested monthly and replaced every 10 years.

Please take a few moments to review these concepts with your child. **We ask that you work with your child to check and test the smoke detectors for your household.** Please refer to the information attached to this letter. To assist you, resource information is also available in the *Kids Section* of our website, www.mtlfd.org.

The Mt Lebanon Fire Department can provide you with one smoke detector and install it in your home free of charge. If you want assistance installing any additional detectors, we are happy to come and install as many as you like at no cost. You can schedule an appointment to have this done via the contact information below.

If you should have any questions about today's lesson, the program or general fire safety questions, please feel free to contact the Mt. Lebanon Fire Department.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kris Siegert".

Lt. Kris Siegert
Fire and Life Safety Education Specialist
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SMOKE ALARMS *What You Need To Know*

Okay, Where Do I Put Them?

Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, including the basement. Many fatal fires begin late at night or in the early morning. For extra safety, install smoke alarms both inside and outside sleeping areas.

Since smoke and many deadly gases rise, installing your smoke alarms at the proper level will provide you with the earliest warning possible. Always follow the manufacturer's installation instructions.

Where Would I Get Smoke Alarms?

Many hardware, home supply, or general merchandise stores carry smoke alarms. If you are unsure where to buy one in your community, call your local fire department (on a non-emergency telephone number) and they will provide you with some suggestions. Some fire departments offer smoke alarms for little or no cost.

Are Smoke Alarms Hard to Install?

If your smoke alarms are hard wired, that is wired into the electrical system, you will need to have a qualified electrician do the initial installation or install replacements.

For battery powered smoke alarms, all you will need for installation is a screw driver. Some brands are self adhesive and will easily stick to the wall or ceiling where they are placed.

For all smoke alarm installations, be sure you follow the manufacturer's instructions because there are differences between the various brands.

If you are uncomfortable standing on a ladder, ask a relative or friend for help. Some fire departments will install a smoke alarm in your home for you. Call your local fire department (on a non-emergency telephone number) if you have problems installing a smoke alarm.

How Do I Keep My Smoke Alarm Working?

If you have a smoke alarm with batteries:

- 1) Smoke Alarms powered by long-lasting batteries are designed to replace the entire unit according to manufacturer's instructions.
- 2) In standard type battery powered smoke alarms, the batteries need to be replaced at least once per year and the whole unit should be replaced every 8-10 years.

- 3) In hard-wired, battery back up smoke alarms, the batteries need to be checked monthly, and replaced at least once per year. The entire unit should be replaced every 8-10 years.

What if the Alarm Goes Off While I'm Cooking?

Then it's doing its job. Do not disable your smoke alarm if it alarms due to cooking or other non-fire causes. You may not remember to put the batteries back in the alarm after cooking. Instead clear the air by waving a towel near the alarm, leaving the batteries in place. The alarm may need to be moved to a new location. Some of the newer models have a "hush" button that silences nuisance alarms.

How Long will my Smoke Alarm Last?

Most alarms installed today have a life span of about 8-10 years. After this time, the entire unit should be replaced. It is a good idea to write the date of purchase with a marker on the inside of your alarm so you will know when to replace it. Some of the newer alarms already have the purchase date written inside. In any event, always follow the manufacturer's instructions for replacement.

Anything Else I Should Know?

Some smoke alarms are considered to be "hard-wired." This means they are connected to the household electrical system and may or may not have battery backup. It's important to test every smoke alarm monthly and replace the batteries with new ones at least once a year.

The U.S. Fire Administration would like to remind you of some important fire safety and prevention information.

- Plan and practice escape plans several times a year.
- Make sure your whole family knows when and how to call emergency telephone numbers.
- Obtain and learn how to use a fire extinguisher.
- Install carbon monoxide detectors.
- Consider installing residential fire sprinklers in your home.

Contact your local fire department on a non-emergency phone number if you need help or have questions about fire safety in your home.

Additional Resources

For more information on smoke alarms, please visit the USFA Web site at www.usfa.dhs.gov/citizens/



FEMA

For more information or copies of this publication, please contact:
Department of Homeland Security / U.S. Fire Administration
16825 South Seton Avenue / Emmitsburg, Maryland 21727
800-561-3356 / www.usfa.dhs.gov



Smoke Detector Survey

Having working smoke detectors in your home is essential to any plan to help you and your family stay safe. Are yours where they should be?

How many floors are in your home? _____

Is there at least one working detector on each floor? _____

Is there one in each bedroom? _____

Do they all work? Yes or No _____

Which ones aren't working: _____

Do they all have batteries? _____

When was the last time you tested your detectors? _____

Do you check them monthly? _____

What year were your detectors made? _____

Are they older than ten years and need to be replaced? _____

How many total working detectors do you have? _____ How many non-working ones? _____

Do you have a carbon monoxide detector in your house? _____ Where? _____

NFPA reminds you

SMOKE ALARMS SAVE LIVES.

Roughly **two thirds** of home fire deaths happen in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms



Smoke alarms should be installed on every level of the home, outside each sleeping area and inside each bedroom.

For the best protection, interconnect all the smoke alarms so when one sounds, they all sound.

Replace smoke alarms **10** years from the date of manufacture.

Test all smoke alarms at least **once a month** by pushing the test button.

When the smoke alarm sounds, **get outside and stay outside.** Go to your **outside meeting place.** Call the **fire department** from a cell or neighbor's phone. Stay outside until the fire department tells you it is safe to go back inside.

