



Coffee Break Training - Fire Prevention and Public Education

Wireless Interconnected Smoke Alarms (Part 2 of 2)

No. FM-2013-10 September 5, 2013

Learning Objective: The student will learn information about wireless smoke alarms for older homes and rental housing.

Interconnected smoke alarms can be an important part of family home safety. However, many older homes do not have the wiring installed for interconnected smoke alarms. Wireless smoke alarms listed by Underwriters Laboratories are now available. The safety of interconnected smoke alarms can now be installed without the expense, messy wiring or cost of a licensed electrician. Both battery powered and AC powered alarms are available to fit almost any residential structure.

Wireless interconnected smoke alarms are easy to install and only involve a few simple steps. The first step is to determine what type of smoke alarms are currently in the home: battery powered, hardwired or hardwired with interconnect.

Battery powered: There are no wires connected to the back of the alarm. The smoke alarm is only powered by a battery or batteries.

Hardwired: There are two wires connected to the back of the smoke alarm (typically one white and one black). You can determine if an alarm is “hardwired” by confirming that two power wires are connected to it, then by pressing the test button on the alarm and listening for other alarms to sound. If other alarms do not sound, the alarm is “hardwired.”

Hardwired with interconnect: There are three wires connected to the back of the smoke alarm, one black wire, one white wire, and one red wire. (The third wire can occasionally be orange or yellow.) You can determine if an alarm is “hardwired with interconnect” by confirming that three wires are connected to it, then pressing the test button and listening for other alarms to sound. If other alarms do sound, the alarm is “hardwired with interconnect.”

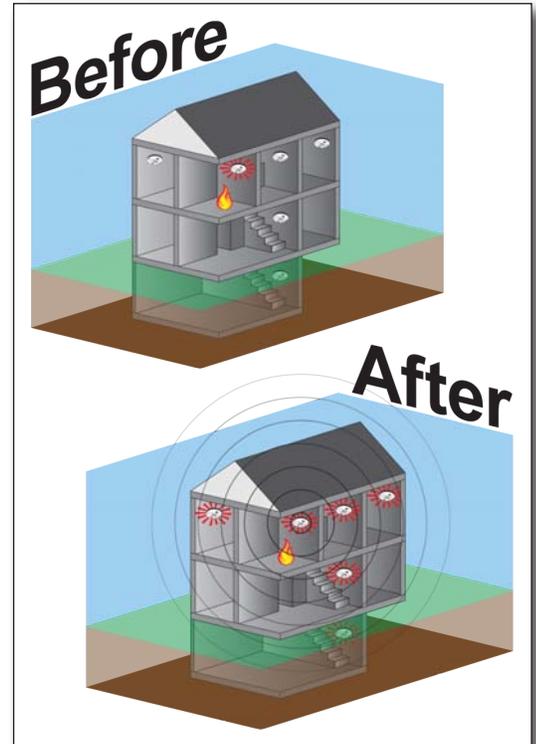
It is very important to follow the manufacturer’s instructions when installing wireless smoke alarms. It is suggested to have a licensed electrician do the work if wiring is involved.

Please take the time to check with your fire marshal or fire official to see if there are any local laws on smoke alarm installation.

Test your smoke alarms on a regular basis (at least monthly). Vacuum the dust off smoke alarms every six months.

Along with wireless interconnected smoke alarms, have a home fire escape plan for the entire family and include guests.

For more information about smoke alarms, visit <http://www.usfa.fema.gov/campaigns/smokealarms/alarms/index.shtm>.



A home before and after installation of a wireless interconnected smoke alarm system.

For archived downloads, go to:

www.usfa.fema.gov/nfa/coffee-break/