

2013 Maryland Smoke Alarm Law Revisions

Smoke Alarm Requirements for Residential Property in Maryland

Single-Family (one to two dwelling units)

- Sale Requirements as of July 1, 2013:

- Language added to the Seller disclosure form asking sellers to indicate whether the smoke alarms are over 10 years old and whether they have sealed, tamper resistant batteries
- This requirement applies to contracts entered into after July 1, 2013

- New Construction (including renovation) after July 1, 2013:

- Number of alarms:
 - 1 alarm in each sleeping room
 - 1 alarm in each hallway or common area outside of the sleeping rooms
 - 1 alarm in a hallway or common area on each level, including basements but excluding unoccupied attics, garages, and crawl spaces
- If more than two alarms are *required* in a new residential dwelling, the alarms shall be configured to sound simultaneously
- The alarms shall operate on alternating current (AC) with a battery backup or approved secondary power source
- This is the same requirement as the current 2012 International Residential Code and was already being enforced by building permit offices since 2006

- Existing Properties:

- For properties built before July 1, 1975:
 - Number of alarms:
 - At least one alarm either battery operated or AC
 - After January 1, 2018 **(NEW REQUIREMENT)**
 - At least one alarm on each level of the home (excluding unoccupied attics, garages)
 - Battery alarms after 2018 must be sealed, long-life battery smoke alarms with a silence/hush button feature
- For properties built between July 1, 1975 – January 1, 1989:
 - Number of alarms:
 - At least one AC smoke alarm installed in the sleeping area
 - After January 1, 2018 **(NEW REQUIREMENT)**
 - At least one alarm in a sleeping area and one alarm on each level of the home.
 - The new additional alarms may be battery-operated as long as they are sealed, long-life battery smoke alarms with a silence/hush button feature

- No alarm should be older than 10 years
- For properties built between January 1, 1989 – July 1, 1990:
 - Number of alarms:
 - At least one alarm in each sleeping area and on each additional story of the home, including the basement but not unoccupied attics, garages or crawl spaces
 - Alarms must be AC and interconnected to alarm simultaneously
 - After January 1, 2018 **(NEW REQUIREMENT)**
 - No change to the number of alarms, but no alarm should be older than 10 years
- For properties built between July 1, 1990 and July 1, 2013:
 - Same requirement as the Jan. 1 1989 – July 1, 1990 properties except that the alarms must be AC AND have battery back-up
 - NOTE: some counties required more stringent rules including alarms in each bedroom for new construction

Single-Family Rentals (one to two dwelling units) after July 1, 2013 (NEW REQUIREMENT)

- Alarms must be upgraded if:
 - Existing alarms exceed 10 years from date of manufacture
 - Existing alarms fail to operate or malfunction
 - A change in tenancy occurs and the residence has not been previously equipped with sealed, long-life battery smoke alarms with silence/hush button features
- AC alarms must be upgraded to new AC alarms
- Battery alarms must be upgraded to sealed, long-life battery smoke alarms with silence/hush button features
- Alarms must be located on each level of the residence excluding unoccupied attics, garages, or crawl spaces
 - Any additional alarm required by the new law may be battery operated as long as it is a sealed, long-life battery with silence/hush button features

Multi-Family Rentals (more than two dwelling units)

- Alarms must be AC powered
 - Multi-family units constructed after July 1, 1990 must be AC powered with battery back-up
- Landlords must provide special alarms for the deaf or hard of hearing, and may require reimbursement for those alarms
- Landlords are responsible for the installation, repair and replacement of smoke alarms
- Tenants are responsible for testing the units and notifying the landlord in writing of the failure or malfunction of the unit
- No alarms should be older than 10 years unless the alarms have been sensitivity tested and properly calibrated on an annual basis per current fire codes