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SMOKE ALARMS

General

Dwelling units, congregate residences and hotel or lodging guest rooms that are used for sleeping purposes must be provided with smoke alarms. Alarms must be installed in accordance with the approved manufacturer's instructions.

Why are smoke alarms required?

Fire deaths occur in residential buildings more than in any other building type. More than half of all fire deaths in residential buildings occur while the occupants are asleep and are unaware. Death usually results from asphyxiation, long before the fire reaches the occupants. Smoke alarms installed in a home give an early warning of smoke and give the occupants the critical few moments needed to escape.

To address the loss of life in residential buildings, the Minnesota State Building Code (MSBC) has requirements for the installation of smoke alarms in a home. The 2007 MSBC adopts the 2006 International Residential Code (2006 IRC). In general, the code requires that smoke alarms be provided on each floor of a dwelling and in the corridor giving access to bedrooms and in bedrooms. Alarms in new construction must receive their power from the building wiring and have a battery backup in the event of electrical power loss.

During remodeling, where connection to the building wiring is difficult to achieve, battery operated alarms may be used (R313.1.1). An important feature of the requirement for alarms being connected into the building's electrical wiring is there must be no disconnecting means other than the primary over current protection (fuse or circuit breaker). Alarms must be wired directly into the building's wiring system and no switches, plugs or mechanical disconnects are permitted between the electric service panel and the alarm.

Power source

In new construction, the required smoke alarms shall receive their primary power from the building wiring when such wiring is served from a commercial source. When primary power is interrupted, smoke alarms shall receive power from a battery. Wiring shall be permanent and without a disconnecting switch other than those required for over current protection. Smoke alarms shall be permitted to be battery operated when installed in buildings without commercial power or in buildings that undergo alterations, repairs or additions regulated by R313.3.