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Fire Prevention Board Revises Smoke Alarm Regulations

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan and Medford Fire Department Fire Chief Frank A. Giliberti, Jr. want to alert the public that if you are selling your home after April 5, 2010, there are changes in the state's smoke alarm regulations for homes with five or less units.

Chief Giliberti said, "The regulation will require that only photoelectric smoke detectors be installed within 20 feet of a kitchen or bath containing a shower, in order to reduce nuisance alarms from cooking smoke or steam that lead people to disable their smoke alarms. Areas located beyond this 20 foot area will be required to contain dual detection, both photoelectric and ionization, using either a single detector or two separate ones."

Use of Technology to Provide Earliest Warning of Fire

Smoke alarms use two main technologies: photoelectric and ionization. Photoelectric smoke alarms are more effective in detecting slow moving or smoldering fire situations whereas ionization detectors are slightly more effective in detecting fast moving fires. Coan said, "This change, requiring the use of dual detection technology, provides the best level of public safety by reducing nuisance alarms that lead people to disable their smoke alarms and by providing the earliest possible warning of a fire and therefore time to escape to safety."

Enforcement on Sale or Transfer

The enforcement of the regulation will continue to take place when the residence is sold or transferred. Homeowners selling their homes after April 5, 2010 will have to meet these new requirements.

Working Smoke Alarms Double Chances of Surviving a Fire

"We must continue to update our fire prevention code to keep pace with evolving technology, knowledge of human behavior, and scientific research," said Chief Giliberti. "I want to stress that working smoke alarms greatly increase your chances of surviving a fire."

Carbon Monoxide Alarms

Since March 2006, all homes have been required to install carbon monoxide alarms on each habitable level in addition to smoke detectors.

For more information about smoke detectors and carbon monoxide alarms, contact the Medford Fire Department Fire Prevention Office at 781-396-9831 or the Department of Fire Service's website at www.mass.gov/dfs then click on "Division of Fire Safety". To help guide homeowners and realtors understand the requirements, a new brochure *A Guide to the Massachusetts Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Requirements When Selling a One- or Two-Family Residence* has been published and is also available on the Department of Fire Services website.