

Maryland's new smoke alarm law, which was signed in 2013, but includes some requirements that just took effect on January 1, 2018.

What the law requires now

- Replacement of battery-only smoke alarms with new, 10-year smoke alarms with sealed batteries and a "hush" feature (to silence the alarm temporarily during cooking).
- Replacement of hardwired devices more than 10 years old. Hardwired devices newer than 10 years still are acceptable.
- Hard-wired devices must be replaced with hard-wired devices. You cannot replace a hard-wired alarm with a battery-only alarm.
- Smoke alarms must now be placed on every level of the home and recommended in each sleeping area.

What the law requires in the future

- The law requires replacement of ALL smoke alarms -- hard-wired and battery-only -- when they are 10 years old. That means 10 years from the date of manufacture printed on the back of the alarm. If you can't find a date, your smoke alarm needs to be replaced.
- Smoke alarms lose their operational sensitivity after 10 years.
- Hard-wired devices must be replaced with hard-wired devices.

What brand of alarm should I buy?

- Alarms should comply with Underwriters Laboratory (UL) 217, "Standard for Safety for Single and Multiple Station Smoke Alarm."

What about rental properties?

- The new law applies to rental properties.

Purpose of the law

- The law was designed to achieve the most reliable smoke alarm coverage possible in older dwellings without requiring homeowners to run new wiring.
- The law's overall purpose is reduction of fire deaths and injuries.
- Studies of residential fire fatalities show that more than half of smoke alarms in these incidents failed to sound because the 9-volt battery had been removed. The sealed battery requirement eliminates that problem.