



Robert L. Quinn  
Commissioner

# State of New Hampshire

## DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY

### Division of Fire Safety

#### Office of the State Fire Marshal

**Office:** 110 Smokey Bear Boulevard, Concord, NH 03301

**Mailing Address:** 33 Hazen Drive, Concord, NH 03305

**Telephone:** 603-223-4289, • **Fax:** 603-223-4294

[www.nh.gov/firesafety](http://www.nh.gov/firesafety)



Paul J. Parisi  
State Fire Marshal

#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**DATE:** January 24, 2020

**CONTACT:** Amy McLaughlin, Community Risk Reduction Specialist (603) 361-6107  
Paul J. Parisi, State Fire Marshal

### **NH Firefighters concerned about the recent uptick in residential fires without working smoke alarms**

*You may have less than two minutes to escape from a home fire,  
and smoke alarms provide a critical early warning*

Over the past week, New Hampshire has experienced at least three residential structural fires where smoke alarms were either tampered with and not working, or not present at all. Fires in Lebanon, Hooksett, and Plymouth all occurred after dark while residents were sleeping. The fires in all of these instances were significant enough to cause the families living in these dwelling units to be displaced. As a state we are fortunate that none of these fires resulted in serious injury or death. However, we consider them to be red-flag warnings that we need more public education about smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.

New Hampshire State Fire Marshal Paul J. Parisi wants to remind citizens that smoke alarms are critical to protecting your family's life during a fire event. "Most people think a fire won't happen to them. While we truly hope it doesn't, we regularly see the devastating effects a fire can have on a family." Parisi continued, "When there IS a fire, smoke alarms are the biggest factor when it comes to giving people time to get out alive."

The National Fire Prevention Association (NFPA) recommends installing smoke alarms in every bedroom, outside each separate sleeping area and on every level of the home, including the basement. In New Hampshire, it's the law.

Over the last 5 years, New Hampshire has seen 43 deaths from unintentional residential fires. In over half of those cases the residents did not have working smoke alarms. Nationally, about 40% of unintentional residential home fire deaths had no working smoke alarms (source: NFPA). Comparatively speaking, over the last five years New Hampshire has fared worse than the national average concerning smoke alarms in unintentional residential fire fatalities.

If you need smoke alarms for your house, residents are urged to contact their local Fire Department, as many NH departments have free smoke alarm programs. Also, the American Red Cross, through its Home Fire Campaign, can provide you with FREE smoke alarms. According to Maria Devlin, CEO of American Red Cross New Hampshire and Vermont, people can sign up for alarms, installation, and a home safety check by calling (800) 464-6692 or going online to [SoundTheAlarm.org/NHVT](http://SoundTheAlarm.org/NHVT).

***Saving lives and property through education, engineering and enforcement***



Robert L. Quinn  
Commissioner

# State of New Hampshire

## DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY

### *Division of Fire Safety*

#### Office of the State Fire Marshal

**Office:** 110 Smokey Bear Boulevard, Concord, NH 03301

**Mailing Address:** 33 Hazen Drive, Concord, NH 03305

**Telephone:** 603-223-4289, • **Fax:** 603-223-4294

[www.nh.gov/firesafety](http://www.nh.gov/firesafety)



Paul J. Parisi  
State Fire Marshal

## SMOKE ALARM INFORMATION



Across the country, 7 people die every day in a home fire.

If a fire starts in your home, you may have less than 2 minutes to escape

Smoke Alarms are your best defense!

- There are a couple of different types of smoke alarms.
  - Ionization – generally more responsive to flaming fires
  - Photoelectric – generally more responsive to smoldering fires

For the best protection, both types of alarms or a combination should be installed in homes. Call your local fire department with specific questions.

- Test alarms monthly by pushing the test button.
- Smoke rises; install smoke alarms on a ceiling or high on a wall, following manufacturer's instructions.
- Replace batteries at least once a year. If an alarm "chirps," this is a warning that the battery is low and you should replace the battery right away.
- Be sure the smoke alarm has the label of a recognized testing laboratory.
- Replace all smoke alarms, including those that use ten year batteries and hard-wired alarms, when they are ten years old or sooner if they do not respond properly when tested.
- Alarms that are hard-wired (and include battery backup) must be installed by a qualified electrician.
- If cooking fumes or steam set off nuisance alarms, replace the alarm with an alarm that has a "hush" button. A "hush" button will reduce the alarm's sensitivity for a short period of time.
- An ionization alarm with a hush button or a photoelectric alarm should be used if the alarm is within 20 feet of a cooking appliance.
- Smoke alarms that include a recordable voice announcement, in addition to the usual alarm sound, may be helpful in waking children through the use of a familiar voice.
- Smoke alarms are available for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. These alarms use strobe lights. Vibration equipment can be added to these alarms.
- Smoke alarms are an important part of a home fire escape plan.