



# **TECHNICAL BULLETIN**

## **PERMIT AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT**

2550 Ventura Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA 95403  
(707) 565-1900 FAX (707) 565-1103

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### ***Smoke Detectors in Existing Residential Construction***

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The California Building Code requires *smoke detectors* be provided in the entire building as required for new buildings, when *additions, alterations, or repairs* exceed \$1000 valuation and a building permit is required or when sleeping rooms are created. Repairs to the exterior surfaces are exempt from these provisions. The retroactive provisions of the code are unique to residential occupancies. The intent of the code is to speed up the installation of smoke detectors in residential buildings. Smoke detectors have proven to be effective in the reduction of fire deaths. Many of the deaths that have occurred in residential fires were attributed to delay in alerting sleeping occupants.

The retroactive provisions allow the use of solely battery operated smoke detectors to be installed in existing buildings, buildings without commercial power or in buildings undergoing repair, alteration, or *remodel*. However, whenever possible smoke detectors that fully comply with the code requirements should be installed. Interconnected hard-wired with battery backup smoke detectors provide the highest level of safety.

#### **TECHNICAL DETAILS**

Guidelines when fully complying smoke detectors are required:

- I. When alterations/remodel work occur throughout the house.
- II. Electrical work is done in those areas that would require smoke detectors.
- III. When the existing building has a basement, interconnected smoke detectors or an audible alarm system may be required.

Since January 1, 1986, every single-family dwelling which is sold is required to have an operable smoke detector. A battery-operated smoke detector, properly installed, will satisfy this requirement of the Health and Safety Code.

## **GLOSSARY**

**Smoke Detector** - a state fire marshal approved and listed device that senses visible or invisible particles of combustion.

**Listed and Listing** - these terms shall also mean equipment or materials accepted by the State Fire Marshall as conforming to the provisions of the State Fire Marshall's Regulations and which are included in a list published by the State Fire Marshall.

## **REFERENCES**

2001 California Building Code Sections 310.9 through 310.9.1.5 and 310.16.1 & 310.16.3

California Health and Safety Code Sections 13113.7 & 13113.8

Sonoma County Residential Construction Handbook Section 17.13

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