

FAQs on Smoke Alarm Requirements

What were the previous smoke alarm requirements?

Prior to December 29, 2024, Housing Quality Standards (HQS) required smoke alarms to be on every level of a dwelling, and that the alarms were placed in the “vicinity” of the bedrooms. The requirements for carbon monoxide (CO) detectors were not changed, so those are still required to be on every level.

What are the new smoke alarm requirements?

The new rules, which took effect on December 29, 2024, require that units participating in federally assisted housing, including the Section 8/Housing Choice Voucher program, have qualifying smoke alarms installed in accordance with the National Fire Protection Association Standard 72. The [NFPA 72](#) requires that smoke alarms be installed inside every sleep room*, in addition to requiring them outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home. A smoke alarm may satisfy more than one requirement. For example, an alarm outside the sleeping area may also qualify as a smoke alarm on a given level. Furthermore, the statute requires that the alarms either be hardwired or use a 10-year non-replaceable primary battery and is sealed, tamper resistant, and contains silencing means.

What are sealed smoke alarms?

This means the 10-year battery inside the alarm is not replaceable.

Does this apply to all units? Is anyone “grandfathered in”?

Yes, it applies to all units on program. No units are “grandfathered in”. It does not matter how old the unit is. Smoke alarms began being hardwired in the mid-1990s, but they might not be in all the required locations.

Where are smoke alarms required?

The [NFPA 72](#) requires that smoke alarms be installed inside every sleep room*, in addition to requiring them outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home.

How will the smoke alarm requirements be enforced?

IHFA will be looking for this during regular inspections. Smoke alarms not meeting the requirements would constitute a failure item requiring correction within 24 hours.

Are combination smoke and CO alarms allowed?

Yes, provided they meet the requirements for each device. In the case of the smoke alarms, they must be either sealed or hardwired.

Should landlords check/inspect units to ensure compliance/meets the new standard?

Yes, IHFA would highly recommend that you do. Please be sure to follow state law and your lease agreement before entering an occupied unit.

How do I find smoke alarms that comply with the notification for persons with hearing loss requirement?

This is not a requirement for all smoke alarms. In the instance that you have a tenant with hearing loss, major manufacturers, such as First Alert and Kidde, sell alarms that meet this need.

**a sleep room is typically a bedroom but may include another space where a person regularly sleeps.*