



## Position statement

### Domestic Fire Detection

The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) is committed to creating safer, healthier and more resilient communities.

In support of this strategic objective it is considered that improving the standard of fire detection within dwellings would contribute significantly to reducing fire casualties and fatalities and also materially reduce fire losses arising from accidental fires.

In addition, it is important that public fire safety information and advice keeps pace with changing technical standards, advances in technology and also reflects the range of products being manufactured, supplied and retailed in the UK.

The primary intent of this position statement is to revise the version issued in May 2015, to harmonise and update the information and advice being provided to the public and others in respect of domestic fire detection.

### Background

In 1987, only 9% of households in the UK had a working smoke alarm. Current figures show that approximately 90% of households now have a working smoke alarm. This improvement has largely resulted from a significant programme of home safety visits undertaken by Fire and Rescue Services, and from regular publicity campaigns around the simple messages of fitting smoke alarms and testing them regularly.

### Current Position

NFCC believe every home should have smoke alarms and no home should be unprotected. Despite the significant increase in ownership of working smoke alarms, dwelling fire fatalities still occur, even in properties where smoke alarms are fitted and working. In some instances smoke alarms are not fitted in the right place or are not suitable for the occupiers needs. Advances in technology also mean that we have a greater understanding that different types of smoke alarms respond in different ways to some types of fires.

To prevent fire injury and minimise fire damage it is crucial that any outbreak of fire in the home is quickly detected and the alarm raised at the earliest possible stage of smoke production and fire growth.

Given these issues, the fact that current advice is more than 30 years old and smoke alarms are less expensive and benefiting from advances in new technology, NFCC is updating its advice as follows:

- Fitting a smoke alarm on every floor of a home should be recognised as a minimum standard (in a circulation space such as a hall or landing).
- It is recommended that, additionally, smoke alarms are fitted in every room in the house which is regularly inhabited (i.e. bedrooms, living rooms, dining rooms) based upon the fire risk to the occupants.

- NFCC recommend that the smoke alarm has a sealed battery compartment to prevent tampering or removal of the battery.
- NFCC recommend an optical multi sensor smoke alarm with a ten year life span.
- It is additionally recommended that a heat alarm should be fitted in the kitchen.
- Where possible, these alarms should be inter-linked so that all will actuate within the property irrespective of the fire location.
- All smoke alarms (including hard wired) should be replaced after ten years, or by the 'replace by' date indicated on the base or earlier if found to be defective.

## Public Safety Information

Key public fire safety messages and prevention activities such as home safety visits should be aimed at protecting all occupants of dwellings.

NFCC encourage those who can (or have a legislative responsibility to do so) to provide suitable and sufficient fire detection and warning and support those who can't, due to age, ill health and/or social circumstance to get the help and assistance needed to adequately protect themselves from fire.

Specialist domestic fire alarms are readily available for persons with impaired hearing to increase audibility and consideration should be given to the provision of an interlinked smoke alarm within the bedroom.

NFCC aims to ensure that all homes within the UK are provided with a standard of fire detection and warning that is appropriate to the layout, fire risks and hazards within the home and best suited to the health and circumstances of the occupants.

## Scotland

In 2018 changes were made to [the Housing \(Scotland\) Act 1987](#) in relation to fire and smoke alarms which will apply to **all homes in Scotland**.

The main requirements are:

- at least one smoke alarm installed in the room most frequently used for general daytime living purposes,
- at least one smoke alarm in every circulation space on each storey, such as hallways and landings,
- at least one heat alarm installed in every kitchen,
- all alarms should be ceiling mounted, and
- all alarms should be interlinked.

There will be a two-year period for compliance once the regulations are in force, meaning homeowners would have until early 2021 to comply.