



4-2-09

## **Industry Notice Retroactive Smoke Detectors for Commercial Residential Buildings**

Since the mid-1980's, the City of Fort Worth has required retroactive battery operated smoke detectors in residential occupancies. The provisions written in the original ordinance were based upon the same requirements as new construction.

Over the years, the adopted Fire Code has upgraded the retroactive provisions, staying in step with the same requirements for new construction. However, the Building and Residential Codes have lagged behind, creating a conflict.

With the recent upgrade in Fire Code amendments, staff has upgraded the Building Code to correspond with the Fire Code smoke detector requirements. This upgrade has not been applied to one- and two-family dwellings and townhouses under the Residential Code. However, staff intends to upgrade that code by the end of the year.

In short, the Building Code and Residential Code provisions for retroactive smoke detectors have fallen behind the Fire Code. As such, amendments have been made to correct the conflict. The basic difference is that battery operated smoke detectors will now need to be installed in the sleeping rooms as well. This will mean purchasing a few more smoke detectors.

The requirement has always and continues to be retroactive. Staff enforcement is performed as we are present doing other inspections. And, since correction does allow for the hanging of a battery operated smoke detector, compliance is not difficult. An owner that becomes informed of the law without city inspection should consider installation of the smoke detectors to prevent any liability issues.

Effective this date, when inspections are performed by Planning and Development staff, commercial residential uses (tri-plex's, apartments, hotels, motels, etc.), the following installations will be required for battery smoke detectors.

Temporary Living (hotels, motels, etc.)

1. In sleeping areas.
2. In every room in the path of the means of egress from the sleeping area to the door leading from the sleeping unit.
3. In each story within the sleeping unit, including basements. For sleeping units with split levels and without an intervening door between the adjacent levels, a smoke alarm installed on the upper level shall suffice for the adjacent lower level provided that the lower level is less than one full story below the upper level.

Permanent Living (tri-plex's, apartments, assisted living)

1. On the ceiling or wall outside of each separate sleeping area in the immediate vicinity of bedrooms.
2. In each room used for sleeping purposes.
3. In each story within a dwelling unit, including uninhabitable attics. In dwellings or dwelling units with split levels and without an intervening door between the adjacent levels, a smoke alarm installed on the upper level shall suffice for the adjacent lower level provided that the lower level is less than one full story below the upper level.

Smoke detectors have proven to be a low cost effective life safety product. Installation, even of battery smoke detectors, is done so in an effort to save lives.

Al Godwin, CBO  
Building Official