

Line Up Drill: Smoke Alarms – What MCFRS Personnel Need to Know

Smoke Alarms are designed and installed primarily to (1) ALERT AND AWAKEN RESIDENTS about the presence of smoke and (2) PROTECT THE PRIMARY MEANS OF EGRESS. Therefore, working smoke alarms are essential in the vicinity of bedrooms and other rooms where people sleep and along their primary escape route.

MCFRS can help County residents by (1) making sure that their existing smoke alarms are working, (2) in some cases providing and installing new or replacement smoke alarms, and (3) teaching fire prevention and fire safety (in case of fire, GET OUT and then CALL 911).

When MCFRS provides and installs smoke alarms, we can (1) help residents install alarms that they have purchased on their own, and/or (2) provide and install a very limited number of MCFRS-provided smoke alarms. We prefer option #1 over #2, since #2 is not sustainable on a large scale. **IMPORTANT: MCFRS does not give away smoke alarms.** Instead, MCFRS will install a very limited number of smoke alarms that we have provided at no cost to a homeowner.

Life Safety Safe: This is a term that the MCFRS Community Risk Reduction (CRR) Section has adopted to describe our approach to installing smoke alarms. Life Safety Safe means that when MCFRS personnel engage with a home that needs support with its smoke alarms, we will ensure that there are a minimum number of working smoke alarms that will ALERT AND AWAKEN RESIDENTS and PROTECT THE PRIMARY MEANS OF EGRESS. For most homes, this might mean one alarm in the common hallway outside of the bedrooms, and one at bottom of the stairs near the front door. Please note that Life Safety Safe is usually not equivalent to bringing a home's alarms up to the Fire and Life Safety Code. Other alarms that are above and beyond the Life Safety Safe criteria (in the basement, inside the bedrooms, etc.) are the responsibility of the homeowner to purchase, install, and maintain.

Pop Culture Meets Code:

The year *Jaws* hit the big screen, the fire code in Montgomery County, Maryland made a blockbuster move of its own — 1975 marked the switch from battery-only smoke alarms to hardwired smoke alarms with battery backup.

When installing or inspecting alarms, remember: knowing what the Code required when the home was PERMITTED helps ensure every installation is

compliant and every resident is informed and protected.

CRR Article on Updates to Maryland's Smoke Alarm Law: [Click Here](#)

For more information, please click here for the [Smoke Alarm Matrix](#) or contact the MCFRS CRR Section by phone or email.