



Fact Sheet:

Requiring Lithium Battery Smoke Alarms in Rental Units

The Child Fatality Task Force recommends policy solutions to foster the health and well-being of our next generation with the goal of reducing child deaths. Since policy-makers passed the first CFTF recommendation on smoke alarms in rental homes in 1995, the number of children killed by fire and flame has decreased by 44 percent.

The Child Fatality Task Force recommends requiring the use of a 10-year lithium battery smoke alarm in most rental units. Lithium battery smoke alarms can save lives and property by reducing the chance of human error in forgetting to keep fresh batteries in the smoke alarms. (Conventional battery smoke alarms are still appropriate when the home has a hardwired smoke alarm with a battery backup or when a smoke alarm is combined with carbon monoxide detector.)

Lithium battery smoke alarms don't need to have the batteries replaced and often are tamper resistant. Conventional 9 volt battery smoke alarms typically should be replaced after 10 years, but the battery must be replaced annually for it to work reliably. Sometimes, people take the batteries out of the smoke alarm to use in other devices and may forget to restore the battery to the alarm. In contrast, not only is it almost impossible to take the battery out of a tamper-resistant lithium battery alarm, the battery is not usable in other devices.

Fire and flame is the fourth leading cause of death of North Carolina children ages five to nine. Furthermore, national data reveals that two-thirds of fire deaths occur in homes without an operating smoke alarm, often because the battery has been removed or is not working.

Lithium battery smoke alarms are comparably priced to conventional battery alarms. Conventional battery smoke alarms are available at a range of prices; \$10 - \$15 is fairly common for the initial unit with replacement batteries costing about another \$20 over the life of the alarm. Lithium battery, tamper-resistant smoke alarms are also available for a range of prices, with a cost of about \$20 being fairly typical. There is no additional cost for replacement batteries. Prices tend to be lower for products purchased in bulk. The proposal allows replacement costs for damaged or destroyed alarms to come out of the tenant's security deposit.

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North Carolina Fire Chiefs Association
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