

## What Are the Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Regulations?

Fire is dangerous, but it comes with two more threats: smoke and carbon monoxide inhalation. Side effects include headaches, reduced alertness, heart problems and asthma. Here's a summary of how landlords should meet smoke and carbon monoxide regulations to protect tenants and give them the best possible chance in an emergency.

### **What Types of Alarms Should Be Fitted?**

Both smoke and carbon monoxide alarms. The law doesn't specify whether alarms should be mains or battery powered, so it's your decision. Consider the following before you decide:

**Installation and Maintenance** – Installing battery operated alarms is quicker and cheaper than hard-wiring alarms into your power supply. Handling mains operated alarms requires extra work like turning off the power supply. Battery powered alarms are also easier to maintain e.g. change the batteries.

**Networks** – Networking mains operated alarms saves lives. One alarm triggers the rest so every occupant is alerted. Battery operated alarms only sound in one area, so other occupants discover the fire when it's spread, possibly blocking exits.

**Back-Ups** – Battery operated alarms bleep when the batteries run low. Occupants might remove the batteries to stop the noise but forget to replace them. Mains operated alarms are hard-wired into the power supply, so they switch to a battery supply in a power cut.

### **Where Should Alarms Be Fitted?**

Fires start anywhere at any time, so install smoke alarms on every storey. Install multiple alarms on each floor to cover wide areas like hallways and corridors. Carbon monoxide alarms must be installed in each room where solid fuel is burned.

To confirm the best places to install alarms, carry out a risk assessment. The Health and Safety Executive says a fire assessment should identify what could cause fires, what could burn and who is at risk. [1]

### **How Often Should Alarms Be Checked?**

Landlords must confirm every alarm is working on the first day of the tenancy. According to The Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (England) Regulations Act 2015's booklet: "The first day of the tenancy is the date stipulated in the tenancy agreement, even where the tenant decides to actually move into the property on a later date." [2]

You could send tenants friendly reminders to check alarms still work. Another option is to give 24 hours' notice and visit the property to check each alarm yourself. Take spare batteries for battery operated alarms. Be prepared to book an electrician if mains powered alarms aren't working.

### **Can You Afford Fire Safety Compliance?**

Fortunately, there are resources to support lower-income landlords. Government-funded fire and rescue authorities offer alarms and installation support for free. Free installation is offered in certain areas.

### **What Are the Penalties for Non-Compliance?**

You might hide non-compliance from the authorities, but it only takes one fire to show them that your property isn't safe.

First, you'll get a remedial notice ordering you to fit and/or test alarms within 28 days. If you don't act, the local authority has the right to arrange for a compliant fire system to be installed. Landlords who refuse to be compliant face a £5,000 fine. That costs a lot more than installing smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.

### **Are You Compliant?**

Smoke and carbon monoxide alarm regulations are clear. Install smoke alarms on each storey, install carbon monoxide alarms in each room where fuel is burned, make sure alarms are working when tenancies start, and regularly check the alarms still work.

After reading these regulations, you might feel overwhelmed. Fire safety, home security and so many other issues must be addressed when you're a landlord. If you'd prefer to be paid a fixed monthly rental income without the extra hassle, consider rent guarantee specialists like us. [3] With more than 30 years' experience, we could let your property within 48 hours.