
ENHANCING FIRE SAFETY IN HOMES THROUGH THE MANDATORY INSTALLATION OF HOME FIRE ALARM DEVICES

From 1 June 2018, all new homes and existing homes which undergo fire safety works¹ will be required to install Home Fire Alarm Devices (HFADs). HFADs² provide occupants with early warning of a fire so that they can take the necessary action to extinguish the fire or evacuate safely before the fire escalates.

2. Presently, the Fire Code requires multi-storey buildings that provide accommodation, such as hospitals and hotels, to be installed with automatic fire alarm devices. However, public and private residential premises are exempted from this requirement.

3. In 2016, about 70% of fire injuries are from residential fires, compared to about 40% 10 years ago. This necessitated the review of the Fire Code to enhance fire safety in homes. These changes were made after two years of extensive consultation with public and private stakeholders, as well as a detailed study on the effectiveness of HFADs in other jurisdictions such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia and Germany.

Key Changes

4. All new residential premises (HDB flats and private apartments/ condominiums/ landed dwelling houses) with building plans³ submitted by architects or professional engineers to SCDF from 1 June 2018 must ensure the following:

- a) Depending on the layout of the home, every storey must be installed with at least one HFAD. The HFAD is to be placed on the ceiling along escape routes, such as the living room, corridor or staircase area within the home, to enable early detection of smoke from a fire.
- b) If the HFADs are powered by batteries, the batteries must have a lifespan of at least 10 years.

5. Existing homes are not required to install HFADs unless the home owners carry out renovation works with fire safety implications (e.g. installation/re-location of fire doors, installation of roof over open balconies). In such instances, the home owners will be required to engage an architect or a professional engineer to submit the building

¹ Fire safety works are addition and alteration works, for example, the installation/re-location of fire doors, installation of roof over open balconies, and works involving walls that separate the residential premises from common areas,

² Fire alarm devices can either be automatic smoke detectors or automatic heat detectors. Studies have shown that a smoke detector is more effective in providing early warning of a fire than a heat detector. Under this new requirement in the Fire Code, HFADs installed should be automatic smoke detectors.

³ The building plans for new homes must incorporate the installation of the HFAD(s), with the installation cost to be borne by the building developers.

plans⁴ to SCDF for approval. Even though the installation of HFADs is not mandatory for other existing home owners, SCDF strongly encourages them to install HFADs to improve fire safety in their homes.

Assistance Scheme for HDB Public Rental Flats

6. SCDF, the Housing Development Board (HDB) and the People's Association (PA) are working together to install Home Fire Alarm Devices (HFADs) in flats let out under HDB's Public Rental scheme at no additional cost to the tenants. More than 50,000 households will be covered by this assistance scheme, and installation will be phased to prioritise households with at least one elderly aged 60 and above. Eligible households will be notified and installation will commence in 2018, and is expected to be completed by 2021.

7. More information about HFADs, including the various types of HFADs and where to buy them, are available on the SCDF website (www.scdf.gov.sg/HFAD).

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⁴ The building plans for existing homes undergoing fire safety works must incorporate the installation of HFAD(s), with the installation cost to be borne by the owners of the property.