

# Working together for a Safer Scotland



**SCOTTISH**  
**FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**  
Working together for a safer Scotland

## Fire Alarms in Scottish Homes

Because of different standards for fire alarms in different types of home, legislation was introduced in January 2019 which aimed to ensure that everyone in Scotland has the same level of protection whether they own or rent their home.

### How many alarms are required to meet the standard?

The standard requires:

- One smoke alarm installed in the room most frequently used for general daytime living purposes
- One smoke alarm in every circulation space on each storey, such as hallways and landings
- One heat alarm installed in every kitchen

All alarms should be ceiling mounted and interlinked. Where there is a carbon-fuelled appliance (such as boilers, fires (including open fires) and heaters) or a flue, a carbon monoxide detector is also required which does not need to be linked to the fire alarms.

### What types of housing will be covered by the new standard?

All homes will be covered by the new standard, as it is important that all homes should be safe for occupants regardless of tenure. It will be the property owner's responsibility to meet the new standard, however, the legal duty to enforce the standard rests with local authorities. Where owners are unable to meet the standard, it is not a criminal offence.

### How long do I have to comply?

The regulations were due to come into force in February 2021, however, in light of difficulties caused by COVID-19, the Scottish Government sought and the Scottish Parliament agreed to delay the implementation of this legislation for a period of 12 months to February 2022.

However, installing alarms at the earliest opportunity, will provide improved fire safety in your home.

## TYPES OF ALARMS REQUIRED

### I already have smoke alarms fitted in my home but they are not interlinked – do I need to change these to interlinked ones?

Yes – the requirement is to have all smoke and heat alarms interlinked. You may not hear the alarm closest to the fire but, by having an interlinked system, you will be alerted immediately.

### Are the requirements different for people who need specialist alarms?

The legislation applies to all homes which must meet the minimum standard and, where specialist equipment is needed, this should be installed in addition to the equipment installed to meet the standard (e.g. for deaf people or telecare/community alarms).

### Types of alarms available

There are two types of alarms that comply with the new standard:

- i. Tamper proof long-life lithium battery alarms, which can be fitted by householders themselves or;
- ii. Mains-wired alarms, which are cheaper than tamper proof long-life battery alarms, but should be installed by a qualified electrician in accordance with BS7671.

Both types of alarm can be interlinked by radio frequency.

Mains-wired alarms, however, are required to be installed by an electrician which will be an additional cost to homeowners. Any re-decoration to walls and/or ceilings should be taken into consideration. You may also need a building warrant if you live in a flat.

Further detailed information on the requirements of the standard, including the types of alarms, is set out in the [Tolerable Standard Guidance Chapters 16 and 17](#).

### How do I choose which alarms are best for me?

First choose whether you want battery powered alarms which you can fit yourself (or can be fitted by a handyperson if you don't feel confident) or hard-wired alarms that require to be fitted by an electrician.

If you choose battery alarms, they must be tamper proof long-life lithium battery powered and must be capable of being interlinked. The carbon monoxide alarm must have a sealed battery for the duration of its operational lifespan, which may be up to 10 years. If you are using an electrician to install alarms, you can also seek their advice on what alarms to buy as some may include alarms as part of their service.

Once you have chosen which system to install, choose a reputable brand, make sure the packaging clearly displays compliance with **BS EN14604:2005** for smoke alarms and **BS 5446-2:2003** for heat alarms. Carbon monoxide alarms should have the **British Kitemark (EN 50291-1)**

Please note: the Nest Protect System will not meet the standard. This is because they do **not** meet the requirements for a heat alarm under the relevant British Standard. British Standard (BS 5839-6:2019) makes it clear that only heat alarms should be installed in kitchens.

### Will it be necessary for tenements to have linked alarms between individual residences?

In a shared property such as a tenement or block of flats there is no requirement for different properties to be linked to each other. There is no requirement for alarms to be fitted in communal areas such as entry halls and stairways.

### I have asbestos in my ceiling – can I still have alarms installed?

You may wish to seek specialist advice but it is possible to install interlinked, tamper proof long-life lithium battery alarms to ceilings with asbestos using a firm adhesive and as such would not require any disturbance to the ceiling. In any case where it is not possible to mount a ceiling alarm due to asbestos concerns, battery-operated alarms that meet the manufacture's requirement and can be wall mounted may be used.

## **COSTS OF ALARMS AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

### **I own my home – who will pay for these alarms?**

Any costs will be the responsibility of home owners and landlords. The cost of the alarms will vary according to what you currently have in place and the alarms you choose to install. It is estimated that the cost for an average three-bedroom house which requires three smoke alarms, one heat alarm and one carbon monoxide detector will be around £220. This is based on using the tamper-proof battery type of alarms that you can install by yourself without the need for an electrician.

### **Will there be any financial assistance provided to pensioners and disabled people to help meet the costs of alarm installations?**

As a general principle, home owners are responsible for the costs of on-going work needed to protect and preserve their own property. As with other housing standards, it will be the responsibility of the homeowner to meet the new fire and carbon monoxide alarm standard. Local authorities have broad discretionary powers to provide advice and assistance to home owners with work needed to look after their homes.

### **I am a tenant of the local authority or a housing association, when will my home have these alarms?**

Social landlords (local authority and housing association landlords) are aware of the new standard and have been working to ensure that the new alarms are in place, where needed. The standard will be monitored by the Scottish Housing Regulator, who may intervene as they deem appropriate for any non-compliance.

### **I have shared ownership of my home with a housing association. I have been told that I am responsible for making sure that my house complies with the standard, is this correct?**

For shared ownership properties, as with other condition standards, responsibilities are set out in the occupancy agreement. However, in general, it is your responsibility as the proportion owner, rather than the registered social landlord, to meet the new fire alarm standard.

### **I am a tenant in a privately rented property – how do I make sure my landlord complies?**

As the new standards for fire alarms extend those which currently apply in the Private Rented Sector to housing of all tenures, your landlord should already be complying. The standard is enforced by the right of tenants to apply to the [\*First-tier Tribunal for Scotland \(Housing and Property Chamber\)\*](#), so if you believe that your landlord is failing to comply, you can apply to the First-tier Tribunal. Penalties for non-compliance would be determined by the Tribunal.

## **COMPLIANCE WITH THE NEW STANDARD**

### **How will local authorities check that home owners comply?**

Most home owners want to make their homes as safe as possible. As this will be a minimum standard for safe houses, local authorities could use their statutory powers to require owners to carry out work on substandard housing, although we would expect any intervention to be proportionate.

## **HOUSEHOLD INSURANCE**

### **How will the new regulations impact my household insurance policy?**

Different home insurance policies provided by different insurers will have varying terms and conditions which a homeowner must comply with in order for their home insurance to be valid. Anyone who is unclear about the terms and conditions of their specific policy in relation to the fire alarm requirements should get in touch with their home insurer in the first instance, to check whether the new requirements will be specifically included in their policy or not.

## **BUILDING REGULATIONS REQUIREMENTS**

### **I am having an extension added to my home – and need to meet building regulations. What types of alarms can I install?**

While building regulations recommend mains operated devices with battery back-up for building work in certain circumstances, tamper proof long-life lithium battery operated devices may be the preferred option for home owners. The building standards system gives the local authority verifier a degree of flexibility when applying the building regulations to alterations, extensions and conversions. They can consider that a sealed long-life battery-operated system that is interlinked via radio frequency can provide an equal or in some cases, higher level of protection than is required through Building Regulations.

### **Is a building warrant required for the installation of fire and CO alarms?**

If you are only installing battery operated alarms a building warrant is not required. If you install a mains-powered system rather than sealed battery alarms, this may require a building warrant to be obtained from your local authority verifier before any work starts. More information on the building standards system and how to obtain a building warrant can be found in the [\*Building Standards Customer Journey\*](#). If you are in any doubt contact your [\*local authority building standards service\*](#).

## **MARKETING MATERIAL FROM COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISES**

### **I have received a leaflet from a business about the fire alarm standard telling me that I need to buy an alarm from them, do I have to do this?**

You should make sure that your home meets the new standard for fire alarms, but should always think about which tradespeople you pay to do work on your home, you can choose who you use, and you should always use reputable businesses. If in any doubt seek advice from your local authority trading standards team. Local Care and Repair teams can also provide advice for older and disabled home owners. The Scottish Government does not endorse any particular suppliers, products or services.

Further information on the requirements of the new standard, and how to meet it, is available from the Scottish Government:

[\*gov.scot/publications/fire-and-smoke-alarms-in-scottish-homes\*](https://www.gov.scot/publications/fire-and-smoke-alarms-in-scottish-homes)