

Consumer NZ warns about ionisation smoke alarms

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These alarms give much less warning of smouldering fires, such as those caused by faulty electrical wiring, curtains draped over a heater, or a hot ember igniting upholstery foam, making it less likely you or your tenants can exit safely.

You can identify an ionisation alarm from a radioactive symbol somewhere on the alarm body – it may be underneath, so you might need to remove it to check.

The Residential Tenancies Act requires all new smoke alarms to be photoelectric long life battery. The New Zealand Fire Service also recommends photoelectric alarms.

If you own or live in a rental property, make sure you're aware of your responsibilities:

- Landlords must ensure working smoke alarms are installed at the start of a tenancy
- Existing ionisation alarms can stay where they are, but all new smoke alarms must be long-life battery photoelectric models.
- Tenants must not remove smoke alarms, and are responsible for replacing dead batteries.

[Smoke alarm requirements in rental properties \(http://www.tenancy.govt.nz/maintenance-and-inspections/smoke-alarms/\)](http://www.tenancy.govt.nz/maintenance-and-inspections/smoke-alarms/)

About Consumer NZ's smoke alarm test
(<http://www.tenancy.govt.nz/maintenance-and-inspections/smoke-alarms/>)

The test, based on the UL217 standard for smoke alarms, was conducted at an independent lab. Multiple alarms were placed in a "smoke-sensitivity chamber". Smoke was introduced from flaming wood, flaming oil, smouldering wood chips, and smouldering upholstery foam. We tested three samples of each alarm model and assessed their response to smoke compared to three control sensors.

To see which photoelectric models performed well, [visit the Consumer NZ website.](https://www.consumer.org.nz/products/smoke-alarms-and-batteries/overview)
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