

PLANS REVIEW & INSPECTIONS BULLETIN 2022-3

Issuer: Peter Ahrens – Plans Review & Inspections Director
Date: 7/22/2022
Purpose: To clarify City policy for Smoke Detector Requirements

Repairs and minor work to 1 and 2 family dwellings and townhouses not over 3 stories are common and need not be overly burdensome. Clarification of minimum requirements is necessary to maintain consistency and provide guidelines for installation and inspection of replacement items.

The intent of the International Residential Code is to establish minimum requirements to safeguard the public safety, health and general welfare through affordability, structural strength, means of egress facilities, stability, sanitation, light and ventilation, energy conservation and safety to life and property from fire and other hazards attributed to the built environment, and to provide safety to fire fighters and emergency responders during emergency operations.

The building official shall have the authority to render interpretations of this code and to adopt policies and procedures in order to clarify the application of its provisions. Such interpretations, policies and procedures shall be in compliance with the **intent and purpose** of this code.

Appendix J regulates the repair, renovation alteration and reconstruction of existing buildings that are within the scope of this code. It is intended to encourage the continued safe use of existing buildings and ensure that new work conforms to the intent of the code and that *existing conditions remain at their current level of compliance or are improved*.

Using Appendix J as a guideline, the requirement for smoke alarms references section R314.2.2 which is specifically the **location** requirement for smoke alarms.

- **AJ102.3 Smoke detectors.** Regardless of the category of work, smoke alarms shall be provided where required by Section R314.2.2.
- **R314.2.2 Alterations, repairs and additions.** Where alterations, repairs or additions requiring a permit occur, the individual dwelling unit shall be equipped with smoke alarms **located as required** for new dwellings.

Exceptions:

1. Work involving the exterior surfaces of dwellings, such as the replacement of roofing or siding, the addition or replacement of windows or doors, or the addition of a porch or deck.
2. Installation, alteration or repairs of plumbing or mechanical systems.

The policy of the City of Knoxville Building Department, in line with the International Residential Code, using Appendix J as a guideline, and in conjunction with the City of Knoxville Fire Department smoke alarm program requires smoke alarms to be installed in the locations only as stated in R314.2 when work is performed inside an existing dwelling. The smoke alarms are not required to be interconnected and may be battery powered unless otherwise stated on the permit. This policy is in line with general repairs and maintenance that do not require a building permit. Exemptions for this requirement are stated above and include but are not limited to work on exterior surfaces of dwellings and work that involves plumbing or mechanical systems unless otherwise stated.

[COK Fire Alarm program](#)

[2018 International Residential Code](#)