



TOWNSHIP OF MAHWAH FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU

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LOW VOLTAGE FIRE ALARMS AND FALSE ALARMS ASSOCIATED WITH THEM

First and foremost, all home fire detection systems, must be up to date and tested annually.

Hardwired Fire Alarm systems come in two types, 110v with 10-year battery backup and Low Voltage systems. Building codes require all homes to be protected by a fire detection system and 110v, which is the norm and required, the low voltage is a luxury, not a requirement.

110v hardwired detectors with battery backup. Since 1977, all homes are built with this type of system, with a detector on every level of the home and since 1991, on every level and in each bedroom. All 110v smoke and CO detectors must be less than 10 years old and need to be if you sell your home. With the advent of the new 10-year lithium battery backup devices, we encourage homeowners to upgrade and replace when the detector needs to be replaced. They also cut down on false alarms. Low battery chirps are mistaken, most of the time, as an activation of the device. When it is the battery becoming weak and due for replacement. The lithium battery does not need to be replaced, it will last for the period it is designed for, which is about 10 years.

Low Voltage, these systems need to be tested annually by a qualified technician and monitored by an alarm company. Depending on the system, homeowners need to maintain these systems. Maintaining a 110v system is just a matter of changing the batteries or detectors when they die or having their alarm company test the low voltage system annually and provide you with an NFPA 72 report that documents the system. As stated above, not a required system for a single-family home.

If the Fire Department is called to your home due to malfunctioning detectors and the system is not being maintained, warnings and penalties will be issued per the township ordinance 4.9.8. Failure to obey and pay the fines, could cause you to remove the low voltage system altogether and replace it with the hardwired 110v with the 10-year battery backup smoke detectors. You would need permits to do the required work to make this happen.

Based on what I mentioned above and per the NFPA 72 guidelines, the low voltage system must be tested annually and must be monitored by the alarm company. More often than not, the Fire Department is dispatched to alarms in single family homes for a number of reasons, burned food, steam from the shower, etc., which in itself is not an issue, unless it happens on a regular basis. Malfunctioning detectors are another issue and cause false alarms and, in some cases, multiple responses on the same day to the same location.