

Media release



Planning &
Infrastructure



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Smoke alarm fines now apply to caravan and mobile home owners

The NSW Government is urging caravan and mobile home owners to install smoke alarms as soon as possible to avoid facing on-the-spot \$200 fines which will now apply.

Fire and Rescue NSW Commissioner Greg Mullins said that for as little as \$15, a smoke alarm could save the lives of moveable dwelling occupants in the event of a fire.

“A smoke alarm can mean the difference between life and death if a fire takes hold in a caravan or campervan,” Commissioner Mullins said.

“The limited escape options, coupled with lightweight and combustible fittings, mean every second counts in an emergency.

“Fire and Rescue NSW firefighters attended more than 692 fires involving moveable dwelling vehicles from 1999 to 2010, and these fires tragically resulted in 12 deaths and another 72 injuries.”

A NSW Government regulation, which commenced on February 25, made it compulsory for smoke alarms to be fitted in new and existing moveable dwellings where people sleep (regardless of whether they are registered for road use or not). This includes caravans, campervans, holiday vans, park vans, rigid annexes and associated structures.

The Director-General of the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, Sam Haddad, said moveable dwelling owners were given a six-month grace period to install the alarms, before fines commenced on August 25.

“Now that this grace period is over, fines may apply if an owner has failed to install an alarm,” Mr Haddad said.

“In saying this, there are no additional powers for council or police to specifically enter dwellings to look for alarms because we want to rely on community education and support rather than heavy-handed enforcement to get the message out there.

“Nevertheless, we hope the fact that fines are now part of State law on this issue will provide a significant incentive for people to install their alarms.”

The smoke alarms must have a ‘hush’ button to assist with managing false alarms which could arise from daily activities, such as cooking that produces smoke or steam.

On-the-spot fines of \$200 (or up to \$550 if the matter proceeds to court) now apply for not installing a smoke alarm in a moveable dwelling.

Fines commenced on February 25 for cases where people removed or interfered with a smoke alarm already installed in a moveable dwelling.

The regulation also applies to moveable dwellings which are not regularly moved but are used for sleeping, such as site vans and caravans in backyards. It does not however apply to a typical camping tent.

Further information is available at www.planning.nsw.gov.au and www.fire.nsw.gov.au

NOTE ON FINE ENFORCEMENT:

The Department of Planning and Infrastructure and Fire and Rescue NSW will primarily be relying on public education, awareness and co-operation to highlight the responsibility of moveable dwelling owners to install and maintain the smoke alarms, rather than enforcement and inspections.

The relevant regulation for smoke alarms does not contain any additional powers for councils to investigate whether a moveable dwelling complies with the new requirements.

Under NSW law, council-employed or other authorised persons can enter moveable dwellings to specifically check for smoke alarms:

- after a search warrant has been granted; or
- when permission has been given by the occupier of the moveable dwelling.

This power of entry regime considers the need to balance the privacy of occupants against the right for enforcement officers to seek public safety outcomes.

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