

Cheap 240v Smoke Alarm Models – Why They Are a Health Risk

As the deadline for the new 2022 Queensland smoke alarm legislation looms, more property owners are scrambling to make their rental properties compliant. Depending on the property, upgrading to the new smoke alarm legislation can be costly. An alarming new trend has emerged where cheaper photoelectric smoke alarms are being installed to save on these costs. However, cheaper models are not always compliant to the new legislation and may present a health risk.



Some alarms have a plug-in lead to power the alarm which is fed through a large hole in the base plate. The lead on these alarms could be a fire or electrical safety risk as they only have a single insulation cable and cheap terminals. To safely remove the alarms from the base plate to replace the backup battery, the home's power must be turned off. Additionally, the large hole in the base plate presents a rather significant health risk should the alarm be installed on an asbestos containing ceiling due to the continuous exposure to friable asbestos.

Exposure to asbestos fibres can cause life-threatening illnesses. As such there are strict guidelines around the handling and disposal of all contaminated materials after installation. Unfortunately, it is not possible to be sure a material contains asbestos unless a chemical test is conducted. Several products used in homes contain asbestos, yet others do not and are safe to use despite their similar appearance. As a general rule, if a building was built;

- before the mid-1980s, it is highly likely that it would have asbestos material.
- between the mid-1980s and 1990s, it is likely that it would have some asbestos material.
- after 1990, it is highly unlikely that it would have asbestos material.

Because of the health risks associated and the potential exposure to both our technicians and the tenants of the home, S.A.M Systems QLD have eliminated the hazard altogether by adopting a best practice approach and not disturbing materials that likely contain asbestos.

Instead our technicians will install smoke alarms; Please note, BROOKS ALARM BASES have a foam backing to prevent fibres from filtering through

- on timber strips or any other material on the ceiling that is not asbestos, where present.
- using double-sided tape, where alarms cannot be screwed into the ceiling.
- on to the wall, where the ceiling has sprayed on plaster which contains asbestos fibres.

Our technicians will not remove or relocate alarms that have already been installed on likely asbestos containing material as this would disturb the asbestos.

Property owners should think twice about opting for the cheapest option when selecting a smoke alarm as not only are these new problem alarms an asbestos health-risk, electrical shock risk, and fire risk, they may also not be compliant to the new 2022 Queensland smoke alarm legislation. This means when rectification work is required it will be up to the property owner to find a provider who is an expert in legislation as well as willing to work with asbestos containing materials.

The best approach is to avoid these alarms altogether and ensure that your smoke alarm installer is using high-quality compliant alarms. Many other providers are using these problem smoke alarms to keep their installation prices low. When choosing a smoke alarm installer enquire after the smoke alarm brand they are using and make sure to ask them if the smoke alarms;

- meet Australian Standard 3786:2014;
- are photoelectric;
- are powered by either 240 volt or 10-year lithium batteries;
- are interconnectable.

These below brands are known to have the hole in the base plate, so it is best to avoid them.

Power	Brand	Model Range
240v	Firepro	FP240V
240v	Siterwell	GS518, GS519,
240v	Family First	FFPACHI

If you are looking to upgrade your property to the 2022 legislation, you can read more about the smoke alarm brands S.A.M Systems QLD recommend [here](#).