

Solid Waste Management Department

Smoke Detector Disposal

The most common type of smoke detectors contains a small amount of Americium 241, a radioactive material, which is bonded to a metallic foil and sealed in an ionization chamber. As long as you use the smoke detector as directed and do not open it, there is no radiation health risk to humans. The City of Durham does not accept smoke detectors at the Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) site.

According to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), regular household smoke detectors are exempt from regulation after the initial distribution by the manufacturer. Therefore, they may legally be discarded as household trash. If you have a substantial amount of household smoke detectors, or commercial smoke detectors, please contact the manufacturer for proper disposal information. They have mail back programs for their products.

Check your smoke detector for company information or try calling the following companies that manufacture most smoke detectors under several different brand names. When calling, it's helpful to have available the brand name and model number of your specific smoke detector.

- First Alert Corporation: 1-800-323-9005
- American Sensors: 1-800-387-4219

North Carolina has a jurisdiction agreement with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. If you have questions about the disposal of radioactive materials, contact the NC Department of Environment & Natural Resources - Division of Environmental Health Radiation Protection Section at (919) 571-4141, ext 201.

Smoke Detector Safety

- Use a smoke detector in your home, it can save your life!
- Never tamper with an ionization smoke detector or attempt to remove the americium.
- Replace the batteries in your smoke detector **every** year. Batteries can be brought to the Household Hazardous Waste Facility for proper disposal.