

Our opinion: Detector ruling got it right fair, solid

The Herald-Times
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Judge Michael Hoffs ruling against the city of Bloomington in its effort to require all rental units to have hard-wired smoke detectors reinforced our long-held suspicion that city officials overstepped their authority on this issue.

State law says rental units need to have battery-powered or hard-wired smoke detectors but doesnt specify one over the other.

But thats what the city wanted to do, passing an ordinance in November 2012 that would have required hard-wired devices in all units by Dec. 31, 2018.

The reason was valid: The city sought to make renters safer. City inspectors frequently cite 9lack of power to smoke detectors671 on their rental unit inspection reports. Thats because tenants remove the batteries or let them go dead.

But local landlords shouldn13287t have been forced to spend potentially thousands of dollars to retrofit existing rental units because tenants didnt do anything to protect themselves.

Its common knowledge that working smoke detectors save lives. Property owners must make sure devices, whether battery-operated or hard-wired, are in place in all rental units.

Tenants must be held accountable for leaving the batteries in the device. They should also take responsibility to tell landlords if the batteries are dead; then the landlords should replace them.

State law covers that safety issue sufficiently.

Hoffs ruling that the city ordinance couldnt overrule state law on this matter makes perfect sense.