



Bloomington Fire Department
Public Education Office

CARBON MONOXIDE ALARMS

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless, tasteless and toxic gas. Nicknamed “**the silent killer**”, carbon monoxide is totally undetectable by human senses. Hundreds of people are killed in their home each year by accidental carbon monoxide poisoning and thousands are permanently injured.

Since carbon monoxide is a by-product of incomplete combustion, any fuel-burning appliance, vehicle or tool that is inadequately vented or maintained can be a **potential source** of carbon monoxide gas. Examples of fuel-burning equipment include:

- Fuel fired furnaces
- Gas fueled space heaters
- Gas ranges and ovens
- Gas clothes dryers
- Charcoal grills
- Gas water heaters
- Wood burning fireplaces and stoves
- Gas fireplaces, both vented and ventless
- Gas lawnmowers and power tools
- Automobiles

People are at an increased risk of carbon monoxide poisoning during the winter months. Well-insulated, airtight homes (primarily newer construction) and **malfunctioning** heating equipment can produce dangerously high and potentially deadly concentrations of carbon monoxide.



Why is Carbon Monoxide Dangerous?

If there is carbon monoxide in the air you breath, it will enter your blood system the same way oxygen does, through your lungs. The carbon monoxide displaces the oxygen in your blood, depriving your body of oxygen. When the carbon monoxide displaces enough oxygen, you suffocate.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING?

Long-term exposure to **low concentrations** of carbon monoxide can gradually build up in the blood causing flu-like symptoms such as headaches, fatigue, nausea and drowsiness.

Since the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are so common, and often misdiagnosed, carbon monoxide poisoning should be suspected if **more than one member** of the family feels ill and if they recover after being away from the home for a period of time. Also, illness in your pets preceding illness in your family member may suggest carbon monoxide poisoning.

Exposure to **high concentrations** of carbon monoxide will cause throbbing headaches, breathing difficulties, confusion and loss of consciousness, cardiac problems and/or death.

WHO IS AT GREATER RISK?

People may react differently to carbon monoxide exposure. Those particularly sensitive are:

- Senior citizens
- Infants
- Young children
- Pregnant women
- People with breathing or heart problems

Informational Source: NYFD

SMOKE ALARMS SAVE LIVES

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A Public Fire Safety Message from the Bloomington Fire Department

YOUR SAFETY IS OUR MISSION

PROUDLY SERVING BLOOMINGTON SINCE 1868





The First Line of Defense is Prevention

Your first line of defense is to prevent or minimize the potential for exposure to carbon monoxide gas.

- Have your home-heating systems, fuel-burning appliances, flues and chimneys inspected, cleaned and tuned up annually by a qualified technician.
- Make regular visual inspections of fuel-burning appliances such as your gas dryer and hot water heater.
- Do not burn charcoal inside a home, cabin or camper.
- Do not operate gasoline-powered engines (generators, cutting saws) in confined areas such as garages or basements.
- Do not idle your car inside the garage.
- During and after a snowstorm, make sure vents for the gas dryer, furnace, stove and fireplace are clear of snow build-up.
- Never use gas ovens and ranges to heat your home!

The Second Line of Defense is a Carbon Monoxide Detector Alarm

Your second line of defense is to purchase and install a carbon monoxide detector alarm. A properly working carbon monoxide detector alarm can provide an early warning, before deadly gases build up to dangerous levels.

Placement of carbon monoxide detectors:

- On each floor of your home.
- In bedrooms or sleeping areas if you sleep with closed doors.
- In the area of any fuel-burning appliance (more than five feet away) such as a furnace or water heater.
- With a digital display that indicates CO level.
- These additional installations will ensure rapid detection of any potentially malfunctioning appliance.

However, **do not install** a CO detector alarm:

- Near ceiling fans.
- In bathrooms or other rooms with long term exposure to steam and humidity.
- In kitchens or within 5 feet of any cooking appliance.

Carbon Monoxide Detector Alarm



Installing a carbon monoxide detector alarm does not eliminate the need for a smoke alarm in your home. Carbon monoxide detector alarms do not sense smoke and smoke alarms do not sense carbon monoxide gas.

HOW TO MAINTAIN YOUR CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTOR

TEST THE ALARM (alarms have test buttons) at least once a month, even if your alarm uses a long-life battery or is powered by household electricity.

REPLACE BATTERIES TWICE A YEAR, in the spring and the fall when clocks are changed for daylight savings time. **(Change Your Clock, Change Your Battery).**

A “chirping” sound from the alarm is a warning that the battery is low. **REPLACE THE BATTERY** immediately.

- Never paint over alarms.
- Clean your alarms regularly by dusting or vacuuming.
- Replace carbon monoxide detector alarms every 5 to 7 years.

Informational Source: NYFD

