



Carbon Monoxide Detector Information

What is carbon monoxide (CO) and how is it created?

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless, deadly gas that is a by-product of incomplete combustion. CO can form in homes when there is not enough fresh air for complete combustion of fuel.

Sources of CO include:

- Furnaces
- Wood-burning stoves
- Water heaters
- Motor vehicle exhaust
- Fireplaces
- Gasoline-powered engines
- Gas appliances
- Charcoal-burning barbecue grills
- Kerosene heaters and appliances

What may cause CO levels to increase?

- Fuel-burning appliances and other equipment that are not functioning properly or are not adequately vented may cause a build up of CO.
- Air tight, energy efficient homes meant to keep warm air in during winter months and cool air in during summer months may also trap CO inside.
- Cracked furnace heat exchanger
- Blocked vents and chimneys
- Disconnected or corroded vents
- An inadequate air supply for fuel-burning appliances can cause down-drafting which may force CO contaminated air back into the home.

What are the signs of CO poisoning and build up?

- Sleepiness
- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Blurred vision
- Nausea
- Flu-like symptoms

Signs that a fuel-burning appliance is not receiving enough fresh air for combustion:

- Excessive humidity in the house indicated by heavily frosted windows
- Peculiar, stale odor
- Burning eyes when an appliance is operating
- Fireplace that doesn't draw properly

How do you prevent CO build up?

- Make sure that your fuel-burning appliances are in good operating condition and are properly vented with an adequate fresh air supply.
- Never use a charcoal barbecue grill inside your home or garage.
- Never run an automobile inside of a garage.
- Perform annual maintenance checks on your home's ventilation systems. Check fireplace, clothes dryer, space heaters and chimney.
- Have your furnace inspected annually.

Carbon Monoxide Detector Information continued

Why should I buy a CO detector?

- CO detectors are the only way to detect dangerous levels of CO in your home. Ideally, you should have one CO detector for every level of your home. Ensure that a detector is placed near sleeping areas.

What features should I look for when I select a CO detector?

- The Underwriters Laboratory (UL) symbol. This symbol means that the detector has met the recommended safety standards of the American National Standards Institute.
- CO detectors with an audible alarm.
- AC/DC powered detectors. This type of detector will provide coverage during a power outage.
- CO detectors that have a digital readout. This will allow you to determine how you should respond. A high readout requires immediate evacuation of the home and possibly medical attention. A lower reading gives you the opportunity to contact your utility company.

What should you do if your CO detector sounds?

- Assess the health of the people in the house.
- If there appears to be no immediate health hazards, call your utility company or an appliance repair service.
- If anyone is experiencing symptoms of CO poisoning, get the person out of the house and call 9-1-1 immediately.
- Open windows.
- Consider leaving the home until assistance arrives, to avoid the potential for CO poisoning.

Visit www.dps.state.mn.us/fmarshal/firecode/coalarminfosheet.pdf for more information.

