

PRESS RELEASE



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Headline: *Check your carbon monoxide (CO) detector*

Example Subhead: *Winter months hold highest risk for carbon monoxide poisoning*

Install and Test your CO detectors!

As temperatures drop and consumers begin cranking up their heating systems, Red Oak Fire Rescue along with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) recommend installing a new or checking your old carbon monoxide detector for proper use.

Carbon monoxide is created when fuel burns incompletely, and is often called the ‘invisible killer’ because it’s a poisonous gas that’s invisible and odorless. When home heating equipment isn’t installed or working properly, the risk of higher levels of CO increases significantly.

Installation:

- Make sure to have working CO alarms in the home on every level and outside each separate sleeping area. CO alarms are designed to alarm before potentially life-threatening levels of carbon monoxide are reached.
 - If you choose a plug-in type CO alarm, make sure that the alarm also has battery backup. This ensures that the CO alarm will continue to work if the electricity goes out, which is particularly important in many situations when portable generators are used. Replace batteries in alarms according to the manufacturer’s recommendations. Test alarms once a month to make sure they are working.
 - CO alarms have varied expiration dates, but if unsure, consider replacing it. Many newer CO alarms now have end-of-life indicators. Replace all CO alarms according to manufacturer’s instructions, or when the end-of-life signal sounds.
 - Install CO alarms that meet the current safety standard requirements. CPSC recommends buying alarms that meet the UL 2034 safety standard. Look for UL or CSA listings on the packaging.
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CO Facts:

- In 2010, U.S. fire departments responded to an estimated 80,100 non-fire incidents in which CO was found. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that from 1999-2010, an average of 430 people were killed by unintentional CO poisoning per year.
- Often called the invisible killer, carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless gas created when fuels —gasoline, wood, charcoal, natural gas, propane, oil, and methane — burn incompletely. Equipment and vehicles powered by internal combustion engines are a common source of carbon monoxide. Vehicles running in an attached garage or generators running inside a home or attached garage, can quickly produce dangerous levels of carbon monoxide. The dangers of CO depend on a number of variables, including the person's health and activity level. Infants, pregnant women, and people with physical conditions that limit their body's ability to use oxygen can be more severely affected by lower concentrations of CO than healthy adults would be.

A person can be poisoned by a small amount of CO over a longer period of time or by a large amount of CO over a shorter amount of time.

- At low levels, CO poisoning symptoms can include dizziness, headache or flu-like symptoms. At high levels, victims can have mental confusion, vomiting, and they can die. At extremely high levels, it is possible to lose consciousness suddenly without experiencing less severe symptoms.
- Proper installation, operation, and maintenance of fuel-burning appliances in the home is the most important factor in reducing the risk of CO poisoning.
- Make sure appliances are installed and operated according to the manufacturer's instructions and local building codes. Most appliances should be installed by qualified professionals.
- Consumers should have their heating system inspected by a qualified professional and serviced every year to make sure the system is working properly. Inspections should also include checking for proper exhaust ventilation through vents chimneys and flues.
- Portable generators must be operated outside only. Never operate one inside a home, garage, basement, crawlspace, shed, or in a semi-enclosed space like a porch close to the house. Keep generators, as well as any other equipment with an engine in it, at least 20 feet away from the house. Poisonous carbon monoxide from portable generators can kill you and your family in minutes.
- Never ignore a CO alarm when it sounds. Get outside immediately, and call 911 from a fresh-air location. The emergency responders and fire department will provide information for safe home re-entry.

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