

# Carbon Monoxide Detectors

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## What is Carbon Monoxide?

Carbon Monoxide (CO) is a deadly gas produced by incomplete burning of any fuel. When inhaled, CO displaces oxygen in the victims' blood, resulting in serious illness, even death. Since CO is completely invisible, colorless, odorless, and tasteless, many people have no idea that they are being poisoned until it is too late. For this reason, CO is often called "The Silent Killer". The airtight design in today's modern energy efficient homes can contribute to the problem by confining CO contaminated air within your home.

CO is a common by-product of vehicle exhaust, improperly vented fireplaces, grills, wood stoves and appliances that run on fuel-burning appliances such as gas furnaces, ovens, stove burners, and portable heaters. Appliances should always be checked to ensure that they are in good working order and properly ventilated by a qualified professional.

## What are the symptoms of Carbon Monoxide poisoning?

The symptoms of CO poisoning often imitate those of common illnesses such as the flu. Victims of low level CO poisoning often experience the following symptoms:

- Mild headaches
- Drowsiness
- Shortage of breath
- Dizzy spells
- Nausea

### At higher levels CO poisoning can cause:

- Severe headaches
- Impaired vision/hearing
- Mental confusion
- Loss of consciousness
- Fatigue
- Vomiting
- Coma

## **Severe CO poisoning can cause:**

- Irregular heartbeat
- Coma
- Amnesia
- Brain damage
- Death

## **What can I do to protect our family?**

Medical studies have shown a high percentage of the population is particularly vulnerable to CO, especially low levels over a long period of time. This high-risk group includes fetuses, children, the elderly, and those with heart and lung disorders. When inhaled, CO combines with hemoglobin in red blood cells to form substances that work to decrease oxygen levels and eventually asphyxiate the victim. The awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide combined with the use of CO detectors in the home will dramatically reduce the incidents of tragic deaths and illnesses that result from CO leaks.

It is recommended that at least one CO detector be installed near the sleeping area of your home. Additional detectors are advised for the common living areas of the home or installed near (but not directly over) other emission sources such as heating appliances. However, detectors should not be located near a bathroom where humidity from a shower may affect its operation.

## **What should I look for when purchasing a CO detector?**

Here are some features that you should look for in a CO detector:

- UL approved
- Easy to install and test
- 110 volt with battery backup
- Warranty for sensor & electronics
- Sensor measures only CO
- Audible alarm
- Minimum maintenance

Any questions, please contact the Lake Zurich Fire Prevention Bureau at

847-540-5073