

## What is Carbon Monoxide?

Carbon Monoxide (CO) is an invisible, odorless gas that comes from burning fossil fuels such as gasoline, wood, coal, propane, oil, and methane. When these fuels burn incompletely, CO is produced. Home heating and cooking appliances can produce CO if damaged or misused. Vehicles such as cars, trucks, tractors and lawn mowers are also a source of CO. Any motor allowed to run indoors can produce dangerous levels of CO.

## Effects of CO Exposure in People

Carbon Monoxide replaces the oxygen in blood, causing the body to poison itself by cutting off the oxygen that is needed by organs and cells. Flu-like symptoms are an early indication of low level CO poisoning. More serious exposure can lead to dizziness, mental confusion, severe headaches, fainting, and even death. Carbon Monoxide is the leading cause of accidental poisoning deaths in the United States, according to the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA). **It is estimated that 1500 people die annually due to accidental Carbon Monoxide exposure, and an additional 10,000 seek medical attention.**

Many doctors say that it is difficult to determine the total number of CO related incidents because the symptoms of CO poisoning closely resemble many other common ailments.

## What Are Carbon Monoxide Detectors?

Carbon Monoxide detectors measure the amount of CO gas present in the air, over time. Current CO detectors are made to sound an alarm at the lowest level of CO poisoning. This sensitivity may cause the alarm to sound before symptoms appear. It is important to treat all alarms seriously and have the cause of any alarm determined to be sure your home is safe.



## CO Detectors in Your Home

- Only purchase CO detector units that have been tested by at least one qualified testing laboratory.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for installation and use in your home.
- Install at least one CO detector in your home, near sleeping areas. Make sure its warning signal is clearly audible.
- Test your CO detector once a month, along with your smoke alarm.
- Replace CO detectors every 2 years, or as recommended by the manufacturer.
- Plan and practice a home evacuation plan with all members of your family in case of any emergency.

## Protect Your Loved Ones from CO Poisoning

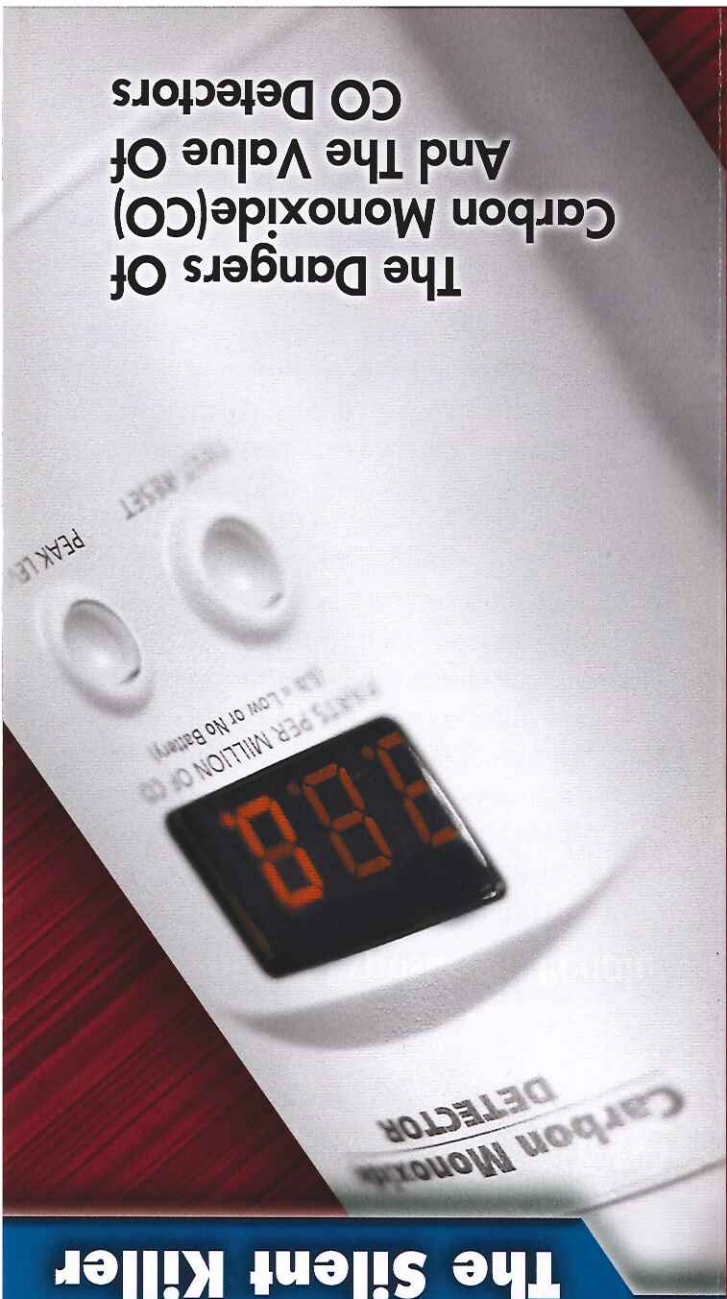
- Do not run motors indoors, even if the garage doors are open. This includes gas powered generators.
- Have your vehicles inspected for exhaust leaks.
- Have a qualified professional inspect, and if necessary repair, all chimneys, fireplaces, wood stoves, etc. each year before the onset of cold weather.
- Make sure heating equipment has an adequate supply of fresh air for combustion. Never use your oven to heat your home.
- Open the chimney flue when using the fireplace to ensure adequate ventilation.
- Always refuel kerosene heaters outdoors and after heater has cooled sufficiently. **KEROSENE HEATERS ARE ILLEGAL IN MANY AREAS. CHECK WITH YOUR LOCAL AUTHORITIES BEFORE PURCHASING ONE.**
- Gas and charcoal barbecue grills can produce CO. Never use them indoors or in the garage, even if the garage doors are opened.
- When camping, use battery-powered heaters and lights in tents, trailers, and mobile homes.
- **REMEMBER:** Carbon Monoxide detectors are required in all recreational vehicles.





# Carbon Monoxide

## The Silent Killer



## The Dangers Of Carbon Monoxide(CO) And The Value Of CO Detectors

Examples of CO producing devices commonly used around the home:

- Fuel fired furnaces (non-electric)
- Gas water heaters
- Gas stoves
- Gas dryers
- Fireplaces and woodstoves
- Gas and charcoal grills
- Lawnmowers, snowmobiles, and other yard equipment
- Automobiles

### Remember...

Carbon Monoxide Detectors **ARE NOT** Smoke alarms. Install a smoke alarm on each level of your home and outside each sleeping area.

### What Should I Do If My CO Detector Alarm Goes Off?

- Make sure no one is experiencing any signs of CO poisoning.
- If symptoms of CO poisoning are present, every one should exit the building leaving the doors open as you go.
- GET IMMEDIATE MEDICAL HELP! Use a neighbor's telephone to report the alarm and follow the instructions you are given.
- If symptoms of CO poisoning are not present, open the windows and doors, shut down heating and cooking equipment.
- Call a qualified technician to inspect and service your equipment.
- Be on the look out for symptoms of CO poisoning.

### Protecting Your Family From CO

Safe use and proper installation of household appliances that burn fossil fuels, as well as, proper use of vehicles, especially in attached garages, is the best protection you can provide for your family. CO detectors can add a level of protection, but are not a substitute for safe use of equipment. Have all heating equipment inspected and serviced each year and know the proper use and maintenance of household cooking equipment.