

Reasons to Have a Carbon Monoxide Detector in Your Home or Apartment.

Carbon Monoxide is often called a 'silent killer' because it is odorless, colorless and tasteless, so it is virtually impossible to know when you have a leak. There are countless reasons to have a Carbon Monoxide detector in your home or apartment, and owning one could save your life. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Carbon Monoxide poisoning causes more than 400 deaths and 20,000 hospital visits in the U.S. each year. The only safe way to detect Carbon Monoxide in your home or apartment is with a working Carbon Monoxide Detector. 47 States require Carbon Monoxide detectors, so work together with your landlord to make your home a safer place.

Detectors can be purchased at your local department or hardware store for approximately \$25-50, depending on the model you select. Things to look for when choosing a detector are accuracy ratings, battery powered capabilities, digital display, peak-level memory, plug-in with battery backup, and voice warning settings. Carbon Monoxide detectors should meet the third-party standards set by Underwriters Laboratories (UL) or Canadian Standards Association (CSA). A UL Listed or CSA Listed label will be printed on the product's packaging; it should be easy to locate and identify.

Once you have purchased your Carbon Monoxide detectors, one should be placed on each floor of your home or apartment, including one near each main sleeping area. Detectors should be kept away from open windows or doors, areas that fluctuate from extreme temperatures, and 'dead-air spaces' such as corners of rooms and peaks of ceilings. If the detector can plug into the wall in your home or apartment, make sure it has battery back-up. Some of the greatest Carbon Monoxide dangers come when the power goes out and the detector will not work when you need it most. Test the detector and replace the batteries every six months.

In the winter months, snows and winds can cause drifts to block exhaust vents, forcing Carbon Monoxide back into your home or apartment. Often temperatures are too low to melt snow in a plugged exhaust pipe or vent. Make sure you or your landlord keeps sidewall and direct vents clear of obstructions, drifting snow, and bushes to provide proper ventilation.

When your detector goes off, it means Carbon Monoxide is present in your home or apartment. If anyone is experiencing symptoms like dizziness, fatigue, headache, nausea, or confusion, you need to get everyone into fresh air and call 911 from a neighbor's home. If no one is experiencing symptoms, you should call the fire department or a qualified technician from a neighbor's home to have the problem inspected. If you are unable to leave the home to call for help, open the doors and windows while you are waiting for assistance to arrive. Under no circumstance should an alarm be ignored!

Additional quick tips to avoid Carbon Monoxide poisoning:

- Ask your landlord to have your chimney and vents cleaned, inspected and serviced by a professional before the heating season begins each year.
- Don't heat your home with a gas oven or use a propane/gas heater indoors.
- Don't leave your car running in the garage, even with the door open.
- Don't use a charcoal or gas grill inside the house.
- Don't close your fireplace damper until fire is completely out and cold.
- Replace aging Carbon Monoxide detectors every 5 -7 years according to directions.

Sources:

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdch/CO_DETECTOR_IN_YOUR_HOME_206602_7.pdf

<http://www.mass.gov/eopss/docs/dfs/osfm/pubed/flyers/carbon-monoxide-ff.pdf>

http://www.kidde.com/safetymadesimple/pages/knowaboutco.aspx/state_news.html#.UuhF2BDn_IX