

CARBON MONOXIDE

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a clear, colorless and tasteless gas. It can be toxic or even lethal at high concentrations. CO is produced when organic compounds such as fuels and ordinary combustible materials are burned, especially when oxygen is limited.

HAZARDS

CO enters the body through inhalation. CO poisoning can be confused with flu symptoms, food poisoning and other illnesses. Some symptoms include **shortness of breath, nausea, dizziness, light headedness or headaches**.

High levels of CO can be **fatal**, causing death within minutes. Carbon monoxide is virtually undetectable without using technology designed to detect it.

CO DETECTORS

CO detectors are the best way to ensure levels of carbon monoxide do not exceed safe limits. Building and fire codes now require CO detectors in residential occupancies where a buildup of CO is likely, such as homes with attached garages, fireplaces or gas appliances.



CO detectors are readily available at hardware stores and online retailers starting around \$15.

SAFETY TIPS

SELECTION AND TESTING

- Combination detectors which detect both smoke and carbon monoxide are also available.
- Choose a CO alarm that has the label of a recognized testing laboratory.
- Test CO alarms at least once a month; replace them according to the manufacturer's instructions.

INSTALLATION

The University has installed CO detectors in residence halls and family housing on the Seattle campus. These detectors are installed and maintained by campus staff.

If you live off campus, here are some tips on how to install and maintain detectors.

- CO alarms should be installed in a central location outside each sleeping area, on every level of the building and in other locations where required by applicable laws, codes or standards. Ideally, all CO alarms throughout the building are interconnected so that they all sound when one (or more) detects CO.
- Because carbon monoxide has properties similar to air, CO detectors are not required to be ceiling mounted and some are designed to be plugged into a standard electrical outlet. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for placement and mounting height.

IF AN ALARM SOUNDS

- If the CO alarm sounds, immediately move to a fresh air location outdoors or by an open window or door. Make sure everyone inside the home is accounted for. Call for help from a fresh air location and stay there until emergency personnel arrives.
- Some devices emit a signal to indicate the detector needs new batteries or is not operating properly. Check the instructions provided with the detector (or search the make and model online) for a description of the various tones the detector emits. If the sound indicates the battery is low, replace it. If the sound continues, call the fire department.

ADDITIONAL PRECAUTIONS

- If you need to warm a vehicle, remove it from the garage immediately after starting it. Do not run a vehicle or other fueled engine or motor indoors, even if garage doors are open. Make sure the exhaust pipe of a running vehicle is not covered with snow or blocked.
- During and after a snowstorm, make sure vents for the dryer, furnace, stove and fireplace are clear of snow build-up.
- Generators, and gas and charcoal grills should only be used outdoors away from windows, doors and vent openings.