



Township of Lower Makefield
OFFICE OF THE FIRE SERVICE DIRECTOR
1100 Edgewood Road Yardley, PA 19067
(267) 274-1127 firesafety@lmt.org



Carbon Monoxide (CO)

What is carbon monoxide?

Carbon monoxide, also known as CO, is called the “Invisible Killer” because it's a colorless, odorless, poisonous gas. More than 150 people in the United States die every year from accidental nonfire-related CO poisoning associated with consumer products, including generators. Other products include faulty, improperly used or incorrectly vented fuel-burning appliances such as furnaces, stoves, water heaters and fireplaces.

Main Sources of CO Poisoning



Know the symptoms of CO poisoning

Because CO is odorless, colorless, and otherwise undetectable to the human senses, people may not know that they are being exposed. The initial symptoms of low to moderate CO poisoning are similar to the flu (but without the fever). They include:

- Headache
- Fatigue
- Shortness of breath
- Nausea
- Dizziness

High level CO poisoning results in progressively more severe symptoms, including:

- Mental confusion
- Vomiting
- Loss of muscular coordination
- Loss of consciousness
- Ultimately death



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How can I prevent carbon monoxide poisoning?

Carbon monoxide poisoning is a serious risk, but fortunately, it's preventable.

Here are some carbon monoxide safety tips for avoiding exposure:



- Never heat your home with a gas range. Gas stoves produce carbon monoxide and can fill your home with dangerous gas.
- Don't run your car in the garage. Pull out of the garage first if you want to warm up your vehicle in the winter. Carbon monoxide is a common byproduct of vehicle exhaust and builds up quickly in a closed (or even open) garage.
- Always have proper ventilation. It's extremely dangerous to run gas-powered tools (like generators, space heaters, and pressure washers) in an enclosed area like a basement or garage without adequate ventilation.
- Practice cooking safety while camping. You should enjoy the wilderness safely. Don't use a charcoal grill, hibachi, or camping stove inside your home, tent, or camper. Besides, open flames and fabric tents don't tend to get along.
- During and after a snowstorm, make sure vents for the dryer, furnace, stove and fireplace are clear of snow build-up.
- Have fuel-burning heating equipment and chimneys inspected by a professional every year before cold weather sets in. When using a fireplace, open the flue for adequate ventilation.

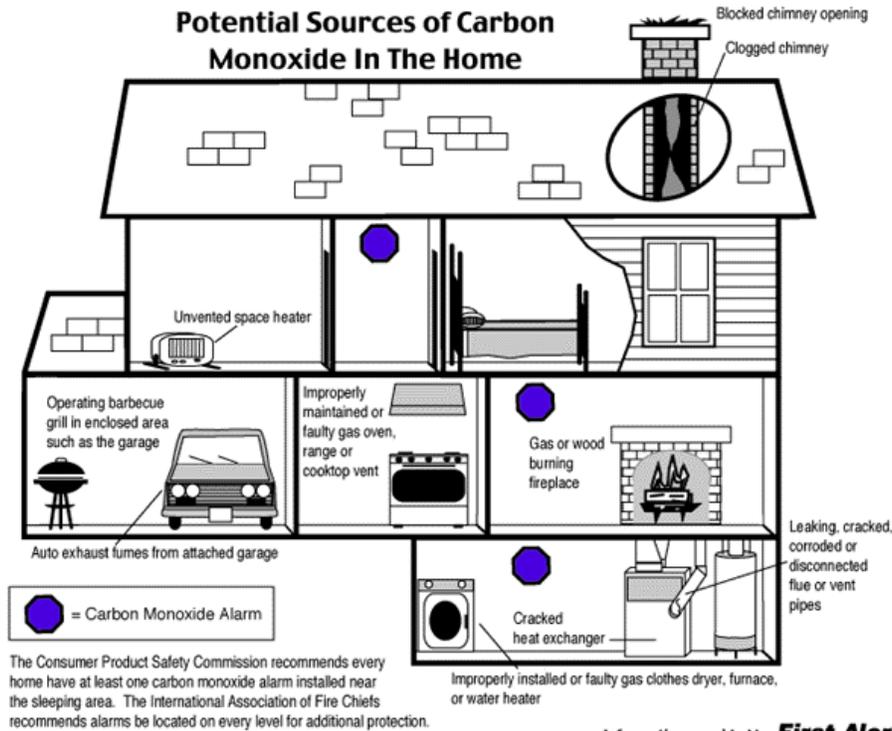
Where should I place a carbon monoxide detector?

Ensure everyone in the house can hear when an alarm goes off by placing a CO sensor in or near each of three critical locations in your home:

- At least one on each level—including the basement and attic
- Near each bedroom or sleeping space
- By doors that lead to attached garages



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Do carbon monoxide detectors operate differently than smoke detectors?

Although they may look and sound similar, CO alarms and smoke alarms are designed and intended to detect two separate, distinct hazards. Therefore, to help protect your family from both hazards, it's important to install both UL Listed CO alarms and smoke detectors.

When will my carbon monoxide detector go off?

The carbon monoxide detector sounds if your sensor detects a buildup of carbon monoxide in your home—usually before you start sensing symptoms. With a low CO level (50 ppm), it may take up to eight hours for the alarm to go off. Higher carbon monoxide levels (over 150 ppm) can trigger an alarm within minutes.

Act quickly when an alarm sounds because low doses over long periods can be just as dangerous as sudden carbon monoxide exposure in ultra-high doses.



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What do I do if my carbon monoxide detector goes off?

1. First, don't panic. Gather everyone in your house and move outside for fresh air and to avoid further CO exposure.
 - On the way outside, open as many doors and windows as possible to help air out your home. To reduce exposure, don't go out of your way to open every door and window, just the ones along the way.
 - Know the difference between an actual alarm and the detector's "end of life" alarm, which has a different sound.
2. Survey everyone's health and check for any flu-like symptoms that could suggest poisoning.
3. If you notice any symptoms, call 911 immediately.
4. If possible, do not reenter your home until the alarm stops sounding or emergency responders deem your home safe.
5. Contact a professional to evaluate every fossil fuel-burning appliance (particularly furnaces, boilers, water heaters, and stoves) and any other possible source of carbon monoxide to prevent a future incident.

Carbon Monoxide Detector Maintenance:

No matter what type of carbon monoxide detection you have, you should conduct regular maintenance:

- Test it frequently using the button on the front (once a month).
- Replace the batteries as often as the instructions recommend.
- If you have a wired sensor with a battery backup, ensure both power sources are working.
- Replace the sensor every few years according to manufacturer guidelines. (These sensors don't last forever.) Many models intentionally sound an alarm when they expire; read the manual so you know what to expect.