

Carbon Monoxide Detectors

Every home should have a carbon monoxide detector installed. They are easy to install and can save the lives of your family members. But, before you buy a carbon monoxide detector, there are a few things you should know.

What is Carbon Monoxide?

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a common by-product produced when fossil fuels are burned. Although most household equipment and appliances produce minimal carbon monoxide when they are installed and operate properly, they can be deadly when they are not. Something as simple as an opened door to the garage, a small hole in dryer ductwork, or a malfunctioning exhaust fan can cause carbon monoxide levels to quickly rise to dangerous levels.

Why You Need A Carbon Monoxide Detector

There are many ways in which carbon monoxide can be released into your home and cause respiratory damage to your lungs, or worse, death. The following is a list of items that may cause CO to enter your home:

Fireplaces

Heaters

Hot Water Heaters

Gas Stoves / Ovens

Automobiles (Attached garages)

Grills; propane, gas or charcoal

Kerosene Heaters

Dryers with clogged ductwork

Nearby traffic

Types of Carbon Monoxide Detectors

Metal Oxide Semi-Conductor (MOS) Carbon Monoxide Detectors use heated tin oxide. When CO is present, the heated tin oxide reacts with it and an alarm will sound.

Biomimetic Carbon Monoxide Detectors use a gel-coated disc. When CO is present, the gel-coated disc darkens, causing an alarm to sound.

Electrochemical Carbon Monoxide Detectors use a chemical reaction with CO to create an electrical current, which sounds the alarm.

Buying A Carbon Monoxide Detector

Although all tested and approved carbon monoxide detectors are sufficient for detecting carbon monoxide, there are some key elements you should look for when buying one. Some carbon monoxide detectors are more sensitive to CO than others, meaning they will detect lower levels of CO than other, less sensitive carbon monoxide detectors.

What to Look For When Buying A Carbon Monoxide Detector

Choose a carbon monoxide detector that has been tested and approved.

If you want a carbon monoxide detector that monitors low levels of CO, look for one that has a memory.

If you are not diligent about checking and replacing batteries, a battery operated carbon monoxide detector is not right for you.

Although they allow for more flexible placement, a plug-in carbon monoxide detector may be best.

After Buying A Carbon Monoxide Detector

Never plug a CO detector into an outlet that is controlled by a switch.

Test your CO detector once a week by pushing the device's button. Replace your CO detector every 5 years, unless the manufacturer recommends sooner.

If the alarm sounds, evacuate your home and call 911 for assistance. Leave it to the professionals to determine the source of the CO.

This data sheet has been provided as a public service by

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