

September 04 Tip of the Month

TEST YOUR CARBON MONOXIDE ALARM

Your best defense against carbon monoxide – that colorless, odorless, killer gas – is alarms installed near fuel-burning appliances and near sleeping areas. But it's not much of a defense if they don't work.

WHAT? Test your carbon monoxide alarms.

WHEN? Monthly, but we'll only remind you every six months.

WHY? Because carbon monoxide replaces oxygen in your bloodstream, causing what is, in effect, suffocation. The risk is highest for the young and the elderly.

HOW? Press the TEST button, but it's important to realize that this TEST button is not testing the ability of the device to detect carbon monoxide. Instead, you are testing the ability of the detector to sound an alarm.

The risk associated with carbon monoxide poisoning is related to the concentration of carbon monoxide in the air and the duration of the exposure. Therefore, alarms will sound if they detect low concentrations for long periods of time, medium concentrations for medium periods of time, and high concentrations for short periods of time.

In general, alarms manufactured after October 1998 are more likely to perform properly. Replace your old ones.

TIPS

- ✓ CO alarms can be battery powered, AC powered, or AC powered with a battery backup. Since most oil-fired and gas-fired appliances will not operate during a power failure, alarms with their own power supply may not offer a huge advantage. On the other hand, if you heat with wood, an alarm which will operate during a power failure is a big plus.
- ✓ Only buy an alarm that meets Underwriters Laboratory (UL) 2034 Standard.
- ✓ If any of your CO alarms go off, immediately open doors and windows to ventilate the house. Call the fire department and evacuate everyone from the home. Because carbon monoxide is colorless and odorless, never ignore an alarm, even if you feel no adverse symptoms.