



## OREGON

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# CARBON MONOXIDE Q & A

## What is carbon monoxide?

- It is an invisible, odorless, colorless gas created when fuels (such as gasoline, wood, charcoal, coal, natural gas, propane, oil, kerosene and methane) burn incompletely
- Products and equipment powered by internal combustion engine such as portable generators, cars, lawn mowers, and power washers also produce carbon monoxide

## What are the risk factors of carbon monoxide?

- Fumes are dangerous for anyone and can be deadly. Some people are more susceptible to the affects of carbon monoxide, including:
  - Unborn babies
  - Infants
  - Older adults
  - People who smoke
  - People who have chronic heart disease, anemia or respiratory problems

## Why should my home have carbon monoxide alarms?

- According to the Journal of the American Medical Association, approximately 2,100 people die from carbon monoxide poisoning every year in the United States
- There are also more than 10,000 injuries annually from carbon monoxide
- Home heating and cooking equipment that burn fuel are sources of carbon monoxide
- Car exhaust (carbon monoxide) in an attached garage can leak into the house even with the main garage door open

## Why is carbon monoxide harmful?

- It displaces oxygen in the blood and deprives the heart, brain, and other vital organs of oxygen
- The molecules attach to your red blood cells more easily than oxygen molecules
- It blocks oxygen from getting into the body, which can damage tissues and result in death

## What are symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning?

- Initial symptoms are similar to the flu (but without the fever):
  - Headache
  - Fatigue
  - Shortness of breath
  - Nausea

- Dizziness
- Skin may turn bright red
- Severe symptoms include:
  - Mental confusion
  - Vomiting
  - Loss of muscular coordination
  - Loss of consciousness
  - Ultimately death

## Types of Carbon Monoxide Alarms

- **Carbon Monoxide only alarms:** Activated by carbon monoxide.
- **Ionization Smoke/Carbon Monoxide alarms:** Activated by smoke or carbon monoxide. These alarms have one or more of the following identifiers on either the front or back of the alarm:
  - States 'Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm'
  - A lower case letter 'i'
  - The word 'ionization'
  - The phrase 'contains radioactive material'
- **Photoelectric Smoke/Carbon Monoxide alarm:** Activated by smoke or carbon monoxide. These alarms have one or more of the following identifiers on either the front or back of the alarm:
  - States 'Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm'
  - A capital letter 'P'
  - The word 'photoelectric'
  - The phrase 'photoelectric technology'
- **Photoelectric Smoke/Carbon Monoxide with voice:** Activated by smoke or carbon monoxide. Speaks the type and location of danger in your home, when programmed. These alarms have one or more of the following identifiers on either the front or back of the alarm:
  - States 'Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm'
  - A capital letter 'P'
  - The word 'photoelectric'
  - The phrase 'photoelectric technology'
- **Explosive Gas & Carbon Monoxide alarm:** Activated by carbon monoxide, propane or natural/methane gas. These alarms have one or more of the following identifiers on either the front or back of the alarm:
  - States 'Explosive Gas and Carbon Monoxide Alarm' on the front of the alarm

## Where do I install carbon monoxide alarms?

- On each level of your home
- Outside each sleeping area
- Install alarms according to the manufacturer's instructions

## Where should carbon monoxide alarms not be installed?

- Garages and kitchens
- Extremely dusty, dirty, humid, or greasy areas
- Direct sunlight or areas subjected to temperature extremes. These include unconditioned crawl spaces (ventilated attics, basement, and crawl spaces), unfinished attics, uninsulated or poorly insulated ceilings, and porches
- In electrical outlets covered by curtains or other obstructions
- In turbulent air such as near ceiling fans, heat vents, air conditioners, fresh air returns, or open windows. Blowing air may prevent carbon monoxide from reaching the sensors
- Directly above or beside fuel-burning appliances, as appliances may emit a small amount of carbon monoxide upon start-up
- Within fifteen feet of heating and cooking appliances, or in or near, very humid areas such as bathrooms

## How often do I replace my carbon monoxide alarm?

- It is recommended to replace alarms 5 years from date of manufacture

## How do I keep my carbon monoxide alarm working?

- Test alarms monthly
- Vacuum alarms regularly to remove dust and cobwebs
- Never disconnect or remove alarm batteries for other use
- Replace the 9-volt or double AA batteries at least once per year

## What to do when the carbon monoxide alarm sounds?

- Immediately move outside to fresh air
- Never go back inside
- Once outside call 911
- Account for everyone in the home
- **DO NOT** re-enter until approved by emergency responders
- Have all home equipment powered by fuels such as gas, wood, coal, natural gas, propane, oil, or methane inspected by qualified technician

For more information on Oregon's carbon monoxide law, visit:

[http://www.oregon.gov/OSP/SFM/CommEd\\_CO\\_Program.shtml](http://www.oregon.gov/OSP/SFM/CommEd_CO_Program.shtml) or call 503-934-8228