

Safety Around The Home

Fire Prevention Tips And Technology

(NAPSA)—They look like small, plastic boxes, round or square, stuck up on the wall or the ceiling—but they could save your life. They're smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors.

Facts And Figures

On average, eight people die in a home fire each day in the U.S.—almost 3,000 people every year. While working smoke alarms cut the chance of dying in a fire nearly in half, roughly two-thirds of all home fire deaths occur in homes without working smoke alarms, according to the National Fire Protection Association.

As for carbon monoxide detectors, more than 200 people die from carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning in the U.S. annually. Several thousand more are treated in hospital emergency rooms for CO poisoning. Yet an estimated 70 percent of U.S. homes are not protected by a working CO alarm. CO is created when common fuels such as natural gas, oil, wood or coal burn incompletely. This odorless, colorless, tasteless gas is often called the “silent killer” because it is virtually undetectable without the use of proper technology. You can be poisoned by a small amount of CO over a longer time as well as by a large amount over a shorter time.

What You Need To Know

For the best protection, smoke alarms should be interconnected, so that they all sound if one sounds. Manufacturers are now producing battery-operated alarms that are interconnected by wireless technology.

Combination smoke alarms that include both ionization and photoelectric alarms offer the most comprehensive protection. An ionization alarm is more responsive to flames, while a photoelectric alarm is more responsive to a smoldering fire.

Hardwired smoke alarms with battery backups are considered to be more reliable than those operated solely by batteries.

What You Need To Do

- Install smoke alarms in every bedroom, outside each sleeping area, and



Properly installed and maintained smoke and carbon monoxide alarms could save thousands of lives a year—maybe even yours.

- on every level of the home including in hallways and the basement.
- Choose alarms that bear the label of a nationally recognized testing laboratory.
- Install smoke alarms at least 10 feet from cooking appliances to reduce the possibility of false alarms.
- If possible, alarms should be mounted in the center of a ceiling. If mounted on a wall, they should be six to 12 inches below the ceiling.
- Avoid locating alarms near bathrooms, heating appliances, windows or ceiling fans.
- Test your alarms every month by pressing the TEST button.
- Replace the batteries at least once a year. If an alarm “chirps” or “beeps” to indicate low batteries, replace them immediately.
- Occasionally dust or lightly vacuum the exterior of the alarm.
- Replace the alarms in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions, but at least every 10 years.
- Never paint over an alarm.
- If you have difficulty hearing, you can get alarms with low-pitched sounds or vibrations.

Learn More

For further facts and tips on how to stay safe from fire, by the experts at Electrical Safety Foundation International, the premier nonprofit organization dedicated exclusively to promoting electrical safety at home and in the workplace, visit www.esfi.org.