

What Should I do When My Carbon Monoxide Detector Alarm Goes Off?

If your alarm sounds, first and foremost, **STAY CALM**. Most situations resulting in activation of a carbon monoxide detector alarm are not life threatening, but an early warning of a potential problem. Carbon monoxide alarms are designed to sound before there is an immediate life threat. The alarm will also sound when the battery is low or the unit is malfunctioning.

FOR YOUR OWN PEACE OF MIND AND SAFETY YOU SHOULD FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF AND FAMILY MEMBERS WITH THE ALARM SOUND PATTERNS:

A LOW BATTERY or malfunction signal or warning will be a SINGLE "CHIRP" every 30 to 60 seconds. On some models there may also be a visual indicator, typically a flashing red light labeled Battery or Service.

A CO ALARM will sound a PATTERN of FOUR SHORT BEEPS every 5 seconds. There is also a red flashing light on the face of the unit when CO has been detected.

IF THE CO ALARM IS ACTIVATED:

- Silence the alarm by pushing the reset/silence button.
- Ventilate the house or dwelling space by opening the windows.
- Check to see if any members of the household are experiencing flu-like symptoms.
- **Call 911 and evacuate the household to a safe location.**

When calling 911, be prepared to provide the following information:

- Your address.
- Whether anyone in the household is feeling ill with flulike symptoms.
- The CO level reading on the detector, if equipped with digital display.

If your CO alarm reactivates within a 24-hour period, call 911 and move to fresh air. The source of the CO will need to be further investigated. Contact a qualified appliance technician to inspect all your fuel burning equipment and appliances for possible malfunction.

Exposure to the vapors of the following household substances may cause your CO alarm to sound falsely. Be sure to store and use these substances away from your carbon monoxide detector alarm or in a well-ventilated space. Paints and paint thinners, adhesives, hair spray, strong perfumes, plug-in and aerosol air fresheners and household cleaning solvents with strong odors such as pine.

Ventless Gas Fireplaces

Gas fireplaces are gaining in popularity based on their low cost, convenience and relative ease of installation. **Ventless or vent free** gas fireplaces are not vented to pipes or chimneys. The burned gases including carbon monoxide are put into the circulation of the air within your home.

BASED UPON THE HEALTH RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH THE USE OF VENTLESS GAS FIREPLACES, THEIR INSTALLATION IS ILLEGAL IN NYC.

How To Maintain Your Smoke And Carbon Monoxide Detector Alarms

TEST THE ALARMS (alarms have test buttons) at least once a month, even if your alarm uses a long-life battery or is powered by household electricity.

REPLACE BATTERIES TWICE A YEAR, in the spring and the fall when clocks are changed for daylight saving time. **(Change Your Clock, Change Your Battery.)**

A "chirping" sound from the alarm is a warning that the battery is low. **REPLACE THE BATTERY** immediately.

- Never paint over alarms.
- Clean your alarms regularly by dusting or vacuuming.
- Replace smoke alarms at least every 10 years.
- Replace carbon monoxide detector alarms every 5 to 7 years.

The sole function of smoke and carbon monoxide detector alarms are to sound a warning.

Develop and practice an escape plan to use this precious time.



Fire Department, City of New York FIRE SAFETY EDUCATION

Bill de Blasio, Mayor
Salvatore J. Cassano, Fire Commissioner

SMOKE & CARBON MONOXIDE ALARMS

Will Your Smoke Alarm Wake You And Your Family In The Middle Of The Night?



Most fire deaths occur in the middle of the night. A smoke alarm is the single most valuable lifesaving device you can have in your home.

An operable smoke alarm will reduce your chances of dying in a fire, nearly in half.

Smoke alarms are designed to detect and warn that silent, but deadly smoke is in the air. The early warning will wake you and your family, allowing time to implement your fire escape plan.

While 97 out of 100 homes have a smoke alarm, more than 33 percent of these homes are unprotected **because the smoke alarms don't work.**

When a smoke alarm fails to work, it is frequently because the batteries are missing. People often remove or disconnect batteries to prevent nuisance activation caused by bathroom steam or cooking vapors.

Disabled smoke alarms endanger your family, as well as your neighbors.

How to Protect Yourself, Your Family and Your Neighbors

- Install smoke alarms that have the Underwriters Laboratories **(UL) Mark**. The **(UL) Mark** tells you that the alarm has been evaluated according to nationally recognized safety requirements.

- There are two kinds of smoke alarms, **photoelectric and ionization**. Both are suitable for use in your home. The **photoelectric** alarms are the most reliable for smoldering fires, which may occur in bedrooms or sitting rooms. The **ionization** alarms are the most reliable for detecting flaming fires, which may occur in the kitchen or garage. Combination smoke alarms featuring both photoelectric and ionization technology also are available.

- **One smoke alarm in the home is not enough.** Install a smoke alarm on every level, including the basement. Place a smoke alarm within 15 feet of all sleeping areas. For added safety, install a smoke alarm in every room where people sleep.

- Smoke alarms should be installed on the ceiling, preferably in the center of the room, but not less than 4 inches from a wall. If the smoke alarm is installed on a wall, it must be placed between 4 and 12 inches from the ceiling.



CARBON MONOXIDE ALARMS SAVE LIVES!

SMOKE ALARMS SAVE LIVES

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- **Make sure everyone in your home can recognize and be awakened by the sound of the smoke alarm.**

Some children and the elderly may not readily awake to the sound of the smoke alarm. Consider installing interconnected smoke alarms so that when one alarm senses smoke and sounds, they are all triggered throughout your home. Installing an alarm in each bedroom increases each person’s proximity to a sounding device. If someone in your home has a hearing loss, consider complementing your smoke alarms with a 520Hz bedside fire alarm and bedshaker device and a high density (visual) strobe light.

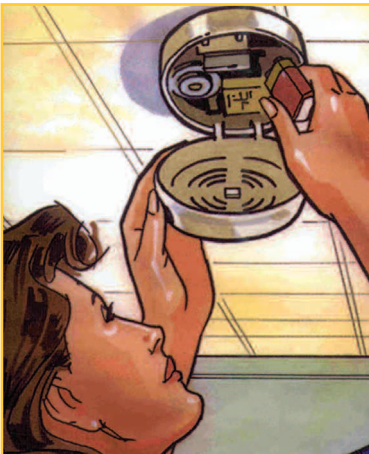
Nuisance Alarms

Smoke alarms frequently are set off by bathroom steam or cooking vapors. **Rather than take the battery out of your alarm, do the following:**

- Quiet the alarm by pushing the “HUSH” button, if equipped.
- Open windows and turn on vent fans to clear the air.
- Consider relocating the alarm farther away from the cooking area or bathroom.
- Consider installing a photoelectric or combination photoelectric/ ionization type alarm. The photoelectric and combination type alarms are less sensitive to cooking smoke.

KEEP YOUR SMOKE ALARM WORKING!

IT IS UP TO YOU TO MAKE SURE YOUR SMOKE ALARM WILL PROVIDE A LIFESAVING EARLY WARNING IN THE EVENT OF A FIRE.



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CO

THE SILENT KILLER, CARBON MONOXIDE!

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless, tasteless and toxic gas. Nicknamed “**the silent killer**”, carbon monoxide is totally undetectable by human senses. Hundreds of people are killed in their home each year by accidental carbon monoxide poisoning and thousands are permanently injured.

Since carbon monoxide is a by-product of incomplete combustion, any fuel-burning appliance, vehicle or tool that is inadequately vented or maintained can be a **potential source** of carbon monoxide gas. Examples of fuel- burning equipment include:

- Fuel fired furnaces
- **Gas fueled space heaters***
- Gas ranges and ovens
- Gas clothes dryers
- Charcoal grills
- Gas water heaters
- Wood burning fireplaces and stoves
- Gas fireplaces, both vented and ventless
- Gas lawnmowers and power tools
- Automobiles

***The use of kerosene or propane space heaters is strictly prohibited in NYC.**

People are at an increased risk of carbon monoxide poisoning during the winter months. Well-insulated, airtight homes (primarily newer construction) and **malfunctioning** heating equipment can produce dangerously high and potentially deadly concentrations of carbon monoxide.

Why is Carbon Monoxide Dangerous?

If there is carbon monoxide in the air you breathe, it will enter your blood system the same way oxygen does, through your lungs. The carbon monoxide displaces the oxygen in your blood, depriving your body of oxygen. When the carbon monoxide displaces enough oxygen, you suffocate.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING?

Long-term exposure to **low concentrations** of carbon monoxide can gradually build up in the blood causing flu-like symptoms such as headaches, fatigue, nausea and drowsiness.

Since the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are so common, and often misdiagnosed, carbon monoxide poisoning should be suspected if **more than one member** of the family feels ill and if they recover after being away from the home for a period of time. Also, illness in your pets preceding illness in a family member may suggest carbon monoxide poisoning.

Exposure to **high concentrations** of carbon monoxide will cause throbbing headaches, breathing difficulties, confusion and loss of consciousness, cardiac problems and/or death.

WHO IS AT GREATER RISK?

People may react differently to carbon monoxide exposure. Those particularly sensitive are:

- Senior citizens
- Infants
- Young children
- Pregnant women
- People with breathing or heart problems

The First Line of Defense is Prevention

Your first line of defense is to prevent or minimize the potential for exposure to carbon monoxide gas.

- Have your home-heating systems, fuel-burning appliances, flues and chimneys inspected, cleaned and tuned up annually by a qualified technician.
- Make regular visual inspections of fuel-burning appliances such as your gas dryer and hot water heater.
- Do not burn charcoal inside a home, cabin or camper.
- Do not operate gasoline-powered engines (generators, cutting saws) in confined areas such as garages or basements.
- Do not idle your car inside the garage.
- During and after a snowstorm, make sure vents for the gas dryer, furnace, stove and fireplace are clear of snow build-up.
- Never use gas ovens and ranges to heat your home!

The Second Line of Defense is a Carbon Monoxide Detector Alarm

Your second line of defense is to purchase and install a carbon monoxide detector alarm. A properly working carbon monoxide detector alarm can provide an early warning, before deadly gases build up to dangerous levels.

Effective November 2004, New York City law requires that every dwelling unit, including one and two family homes and multiple dwellings be equipped with carbon monoxide detector alarms. The law is known as Local Law # 7 of 2004 and applies to both new and existing dwellings.

This life safety legislation:

- Requires that CO detector alarms have the Underwriters Laboratories (**UL**) **Mark**, complying with the requirements outlined in Standard UL-2034.
- Requires that existing dwellings install CO detector alarms that operate on batteries alone or on household electric by a plug-in type with a battery backup, or are hard-wired to your household electric with a battery back-up.

- Permits combination smoke and carbon monoxide detector alarms.
- Requires that CO detector alarms be installed within 15 feet of the primary entrance to all rooms used for sleeping purposes.

Note: If you intend to install a combination smoke and carbon monoxide detector alarm to replace your existing hard-wired smoke alarm, the combination detector alarm must be hard-wired.

In addition to complying with the requirements of Local Law # 7, further protect your family by installing a CO detector alarm:

- On each floor of your home.
- In bedrooms or sleeping areas if you sleep with closed doors.
- In the area of any fuel-burning appliance (more than five feet away) such as a furnace or water heater.
- With a digital display that indicates the CO level.
- These additional installations will ensure rapid detection of any potentially malfunctioning appliance.

However, **do not install** a CO detector alarm:

- Near ceiling fans.
- In bathrooms or other rooms with long term exposure to steam and humidity.
- In kitchens or within 5 ft of any cooking appliance.

Carbon Monoxide Detector Alarm



Installing a carbon monoxide detector alarm does not eliminate the need for a smoke alarm in your home. Carbon monoxide detector alarms do not sense smoke and smoke alarms do not sense carbon monoxide gas.

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