
CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS Q & A



Do I need carbon monoxide detectors in my home?

MN Statute 299F.51 requires that homes be equipped with carbon monoxide detectors.

Minnesota Residential Code Section R315.1: For new construction, every one-family dwelling unit, two-family dwelling unit, and each townhouse dwelling unit shall have an approved and operational carbon monoxide alarm installed when one of the following conditions occur:

1. Fueled-fired appliances are installed; or
2. Have attached garages.

Minnesota Residential Code Section R315.3: Where work requiring a permit occurs in existing dwellings that have attached garages or in existing dwellings within which fuel-fired appliances exist, carbon monoxide alarms shall be provided in accordance with Section R315.1.

Where do I need to put the carbon monoxide detectors?

Carbon Monoxide detectors must be installed outside of, and not more than 10' from, each sleeping area or bedroom. Alarms shall be installed on each level containing sleeping areas or bedrooms.

CO detectors can be placed near the ceiling or near the floor because CO is nearly the same density as air.

How often should I check my batteries?

Batteries should be changed a minimum of once a year. A good way to remember is to change them when you set your clocks ahead or back for daylight savings time! Most carbon monoxide detectors emit a chirp when the battery is low. It is a good idea to test them periodically.

How long are carbon monoxide detectors reliable?

Most detectors are valid for five to seven years. You should replace your carbon monoxide detector prior to that date. A lot of carbon monoxide detectors will emit a noise when they are at the end of their useful life, or they may have a message on a digital display.

Why does the building inspector care if my home has carbon monoxide detectors?

MN State Building Code chapter 1309.0315 charges the building inspector with the responsibility of verifying that the smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors are installed in accordance with the Minnesota statutes.

What is Carbon Monoxide?

Carbon monoxide is a poisonous, colorless, odorless, and tasteless gas. CO is a common industrial hazard resulting from the incomplete burning of natural gas and any other material containing carbon such as gasoline, kerosene, oil, propane, coal, or wood.

How does it harm me?

Carbon monoxide is harmful when breathed. It is a poison which interferes with metabolism of oxygen at the cellular level. Large amounts of CO can overcome you in minutes without warning, causing you to lose consciousness and (without rescue) die.

The health effects of CO depend on the concentration and length of exposure, as well as each individual's health condition. CO concentration is measured in parts per million (ppm). Most people will not experience any symptoms from prolonged exposure to CO levels up to 70 ppm.

What's the stat on that?

On average, about 170 people in the United States die every year from CO produced by non-automotive consumer products.

What if I want more information?

That's an easy one - Call MNSPECT at 952-442-7520!