



FIRE DEPARTMENT

Phone: 218.326.7639
FAX: 218.326.7655
E-mail: grfire@grandrapidsmn.org
Address: 420 North Pokegama Avenue
Grand Rapids, Minnesota 55744



Here are some commonly asked questions and answers about Carbon Monoxide detectors.

What is carbon monoxide?

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a poisonous gas that is colorless, odorless, tasteless and non-irritating. When breathed into the body, CO combines with the blood and prevents it from absorbing oxygen. When this oxygen-deficient blood reaches the heart and brain, it can damage these organs and cause illness or death.



What are the signs of carbon monoxide exposure?

Symptoms of mild exposure include slight headache, vomiting, nausea, fatigue, blurred vision and flu-like symptoms that disappear when the person breathes fresh air.

Symptoms of medium exposure include drowsiness, confusion, severe headache and rapid heart rate.

Symptoms of severe exposure include convulsions, unconsciousness, cardiac/respiratory failure and even death.

What should I do if I suspect carbon monoxide is present?

If you're experiencing physical symptoms, get everyone—including pets—out of your home or building and call 9-1-1.

If you're not experiencing physical symptoms, open windows to ventilate the area, shut off the furnace and other fuel-burning appliances. If carbon monoxide is discovered, don't return to the home or building until the source has been found and the problem corrected.

If I smell natural gas, is that the same as carbon monoxide?

No, carbon monoxide has no smell. When you smell natural gas, you're smelling an odorant that is added for safety reasons. If you smell natural gas, leave your home immediately and call 911 from another location.



How can I prevent carbon monoxide build up?

- **Never operate an automobile, lawnmower, or any combustion engine, or barbeque grill or similar equipment, in an enclosed area such as your home, place of business, garage, tent, trailer, or fish house—even with the door open.**
- **Never leave a fire smoldering in a fireplace.**
- **Have fuel-burning equipment checked regularly by a qualified technician. Most manufacturers recommend annual checkups.**
- **Check frequently for visible signs of problems, such as high indoor humidity, or soot or water collecting near a burner or vent.**
- **Equipment that uses natural gas should show a clear blue flame; a yellow or orange flame may indicate a problem and should be checked by a qualified technician.**
- **Provide adequate combustion air for all your appliances.**
- **Make sure your fresh air intake(s) is/are not blocked or restricted.**
- **Be sure all fuel-burning appliances and equipment are properly vented to the outdoors.**
- **Keep vents and chimneys clear of debris or other blockages.**
- **Don't try to heat a room with a gas range, oven, or clothes dryer.**
- **If you have equipment converted from one type of fuel to another, have the conversion done by a qualified technician.**
- **A carbon monoxide detection device with an audible alarm and a digital display, installed near bedrooms, can provide added protection.**
- **Most detectors have a life expectancy of 5–7 years.**