SHOPTALK

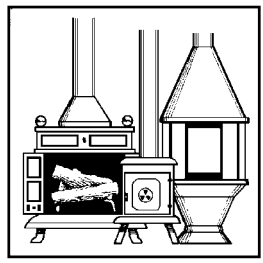
Carbon Monoxide: *Silent Stalker In Your Own Home*

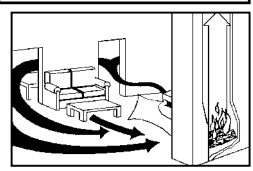
Understand The Danger of Carbon Monoxide (CO)

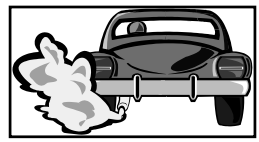
- You cannot see, smell, or feel it -- some amount of CO is present in every home & building
- Mixed with the air you breathe, it enters the lungs and then passes into your bloodstream
- Once in your blood, CO molecules displace the life-sustaining oxygen (O_2) molecules that are present
- CO kills by depriving you of oxygen - the more CO you inhale, the less oxygen is available
- Short periods of exposure to high CO levels can kill in as little as 15 minutes
- Long periods of exposure to lower CO levels cause temporary and/or permanent health damage

Know the Sources of Carbon Monoxide

CO is produced by the incomplete burning of materials, even from such small flames as a match, candle, or cigarette







- Devices requiring fuel such as natural gas, propane, coal, oil, gasoline, kerosene, or wood are sources of CO. These sources can include furnaces, water heaters, stoves, fireplaces, generators, kerosene or propane heaters, welders, pumps, vehicle or tool engines, and chainsaws
- The less efficiently they operate, the more CO they produce -- regular inspection, adjustment and maintenance is critical to reduce your risk
- Indoor air flow patterns may pull CO around shop or garage doors and into occupied areas
- Weather conditions can push exhaust back down chimneys and vents, into your home
- HVAC systems that intake outside air may collect and circulate vehicle exhaust or smoke
- Breathing air is contaminated quickly in small, confined, or insulated spaces that prevent the exchange of air or heat with the outside air
- Large spaces with poor air flow & large CO sources can also become dangerous quickly

CO Detectors Sense What You Can't

CO detectors sense the presence of the deadly gas as a function of time

- Choose a UL-listed detector with an audible alarm, powered by a battery or electrical wiring
- Install at least one detector near sleeping areas, on each floor, near potential CO sources, and 15 - 20 feet from heating appliances -- make sure the alarm can be easily heard from each bedroom
- Avoid exposing detector to high humidity or chemical solvents and cleaners
- Do not plug detectors into outlets controlled by a switch or dimmer, and do not place in an area where air flow is restricted
- CO mixes evenly with room air, so detectors can be installed at any height
- Alarms sound *before* harmful CO levels are reached – lack of symptoms *does not mean it's safe*

Sources of More Information

- CO Checklist at http://www.firstalert.com/customer_service/safe_home/co_checklist.htm
- OSHA Fact Sheet at http://www.osha.gov/OshDoc/data_General_Facts/carbonmonoxide-factsheet.pdf
- More detailed information at http://www.homesafe.com/coalert/
- Extensive health hazard data at http://www.coheadquarters.com/CO1.htm
- Small gasoline-powered engines & tools alert at http://www.epa.gov/iaq/pubs/coalert.html
- Consumer Product Safety Commission guidance at http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/466.html