

The Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation, Canada's national housing agency since 1946, suggests ways to reduce the risk of CO in your home:

- Have a qualified technician inspect and clean fuel-burning appliances yearly, before the cold weather sets in, to ensure they are in good working order.
- Have a qualified technician inspect chimneys and vents yearly for cracks, blockages (i.e. bird's nests, twigs, old mortar), corrosion or holes.
- Check fireplaces for closed or blocked flues.
- Check with a qualified technician before enclosing heating and hot water equipment in a smaller room, to ensure there is adequate air for proper combustion.
- If you have a powerful kitchen exhaust fan or downdraft cook top, have a qualified technician check that its operation does not pull fumes back down the chimney.
- Never use propane or natural gas stove tops or ovens to heat your home.
- Never start a vehicle in a closed garage: open the garage doors first. Pull the car out immediately onto the driveway, then close the garage door to prevent exhaust fumes from being drawn into the house.
- Do not use a remote automobile starter when the car is in the garage; even if the garage doors are open.
- Never operate propane, natural gas, or charcoal barbecue grills indoors or in an attached garage.
- Avoid the use of a kerosene space heater indoors or in a garage. If its use is unavoidable, provide combustion air by opening a window while operating. Refuel outside after the unit has cooled.
- Never run a lawnmower, snow blower, or any gasoline-powered tool such as a whipper-snipper or pressure washer inside a garage or house.
- The use of fossil fuels for refrigeration, cooking, heat, and light inside tents, trailers, and motor homes can be very dangerous. Be sure that all equipment is properly vented to the outside and use electric or battery-powered equipment where possible.
- Regularly clean the clothes dryer ductwork and outside vent cover for blockages such as lint, snow, or overgrown outdoor plants.
- Reduce or eliminate the use of fondue heaters indoors.
- If you live close to a road with heavy traffic, outdoor carbon monoxide levels can affect your indoor air quality, especially during rush hour. Such levels should not set off a CO alarm, but slightly elevated CO levels might be observable on some types of CO detectors with a digital display.

For more information, visit the CMHC website at www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca.

Constable Laurie Hawkin's uncle, ex-firefighter John Gignac, started a foundation in memory of his family members in an effort to increase CO education and to raise money to provide CO detectors for needy Canadians. The Hawkins-Gignac Foundation for CO Education is hoping to "end the silence on the

silent killer." For more information on the foundation, visit www.endthesilence.ca.

As Gignac points out on his website (from a national Home Safety Poll):

- 60 per cent of Canadians do not have a CO alarm.
- 15 per cent believe CO alarms last forever.
- 18 per cent believe CO alarms are only needed if you have a gas furnace.
- 44 per cent do not have their heating or other combustion systems checked annually.
- 26 per cent do not think they have to replace CO alarms every 5-7 years.

Why don't more people have a CO alarm when they are relatively inexpensive, easy to use, and save lives? Gignac shares his thoughts. "There are a lot of misconceptions about carbon monoxide safety and that is putting people at serious risk. The big one is that people think if they have an electric stove they don't need a CO detector. But they forget they have a gas water heater or gas furnace. Or they have a fireplace. Any appliance that burns gas or a fossil fuel, such as firewood, creates carbon monoxide. If a vent is cracked or there is a problem with the appliance, deadly CO can seep back into your home. So the problem is awareness and education...things at the heart of my Foundation. We are trying to convince every person to install at least one CO detector in their home!"

What Carbon Monoxide Detector Do I Buy?

Only two companies are accredited and able to certify that a CO detector meets the standards set out by the Standards Council of Canada – the Underwriters Laboratories of Canada (ULC) and the Canadian Standards Association (CSA). Only buy a CO detector that has a certification mark by one of these two companies. Don't risk the lives of loved ones by buying a detector that hasn't been properly tested.

"We know carbon monoxide is a silent killer," says Rae Dulmage, the Standards Director at ULC. "When people choose a carbon monoxide detector with a certification mark, it



Sixty per cent of Canadians do not have a CO alarm.