

KNOW THE IMPORTANCE OF SMOKE & CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS

What is the best way to keep my family safe from a home fire?

One of the most important steps you can take to protect your family against fire is to install smoke alarms and keep them in good working order. Massachusetts state law mandates that landlord provide smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and batteries for them. You can buy smoke alarms at most home and hardware stores, and they often cost \$10 or less. Check with your fire department to see if they give out and install free smoke alarms.

- ◆ Install smoke alarms outside every bedroom or any area where someone sleeps. Also install them in furnace areas. Be sure there is at least 1 alarm on every level of your home, including the basement, or at each end of a mobile home.
- ◆ Place smoke alarms away from the kitchen and bathroom. False alarms can occur while cooking or even showering.
- ◆ Test smoke alarms every month by pushing the test button. It is best to use smoke alarms that have long-life batteries, but if you do not, change the batteries at least once a year, such as when you change your clocks in the fall.
- ◆ Replace smoke alarms every 10 years.
- ◆ Never paint a smoke alarm.
- ◆ Clean (dust or vacuum) smoke alarms once a month.
- ◆ Use smoke alarms equipped with a flashing light and an alarm in homes with children or adults who are hard of hearing or deaf.

How to Prevent Carbon Monoxide Poisoning?

Carbon monoxide is a toxic gas that is a by-product of appliances, heaters, and automobiles that burn gasoline, natural gas, wood, oil, kerosene, or propane. It has no color, no taste, and no odor. It can become trapped inside your home if appliances are not working, if a furnace, stove, or fireplace has a clogged vent or chimney, or if a charcoal grill is used in an enclosed area. Carbon monoxide also might enter your home when an automobile is left running in an attached garage. When your child breathes carbon monoxide, it harms the ability of his blood to transport oxygen. Although everyone is at risk for carbon monoxide poisoning, it is particularly dangerous for children because they breathe faster and inhale more carbon monoxide per pound of body weight. Symptoms may include headaches, nausea, shortness of breath, fatigue, confusion, and fainting. Persistent exposure to carbon monoxide can lead to personality changes, memory loss, severe lung injury, brain damage, and death.

Prevention

You can reduce your child's risk of carbon monoxide poisoning by:

- ◆ Buying and installing carbon monoxide detectors in your home, particularly near the bedrooms, or near a furnace or woodstove
- ◆ Never leave your car running in an attached garage (even if the garage door is open)
- ◆ Never use a charcoal or propane grill, hibachi, or portable camping stove indoors or in an enclosed area
- ◆ Scheduling an annual inspection and servicing of oil and gas furnaces, woodstoves, gas ovens and ranges, gas water heaters, gas clothes dryers, and fireplaces
- ◆ Never use your nonelectric oven to heat your kitchen or your house