

# Know Your Alarms: Save Yourself a 911 Call

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We buy alarms for our homes to keep us safe, but they are only a device. We as consumers need to be familiar with how to react to alarms, how to maintain and where to place them; it is only then they can really protect us. The price of not educating ourselves on these devices may cause us to make poor decisions when they begin to alarm or when an emergency occurs.

## Carbon Monoxide Alarms-

Since the State of Minnesota 2006 legislative session passed a new carbon monoxide law requiring CO (carbon monoxide) alarms in all single family homes and multifamily apartment units, there has been many questions. CO is the leading cause of poisoning that can cause death. CO is an odorless, colorless and tasteless gas. Your senses can't detect its presence. It is produced by anything in your home that burns fuel inefficiently. It has many sources, which might include: gas dryer, furnace, stove/burner, water heater, fireplace, automobile fumes and portable heaters.

Smoking is another common source of CO that impacts indoor air quality. Here are some recommendations:

- The operational CO alarm shall be installed within ten (10) feet of each room lawfully used for sleeping purposes. If bedrooms are located on separate floors, additional CO alarms would be necessary within ten (10) feet of these areas. CO is the same density as air. Alarms may be placed at any height.
- The Spring Lake Park-Blaine-Mounds View Fire Department recommends a CO alarm with a digital readout that is UL listed. Digital alarms allow you to be proactive. The normal CO level in a home is "0". It starts alarming between 50-70ppm. Place it where the digital readout can be seen. If the number rises and you have no symptoms (headache, nausea and vomiting, sleepiness), open your windows and doors to let fresh air in and call your gas company (it is a free call). If there are symptoms, get out and call 911.
- Install a new alarm every 5-7 years. The date is on the back of the alarm.
- False readings can be caused by placing CO alarms by the furnace, gas stoves, water heater, vents or fresh air. Other false readings can be caused by aerosol can sprays, air fresheners, bug sprays, spray on sun screen, cooking sprays, cat litter, and disinfectants.
- The alarm may chirp if the battery is low. It will say, "L-batt". Be proactive; *change the battery every 6 months.*

## Smoke Alarms-

Smoke alarms remain one of the best ways to alert residents of dangerous smoke. Like CO alarms, residents need to understand how alarms work and how to maintain them. Smoke alarm tips:

- The Spring Lake Park-Blaine-Mounds View Fire Department supports international recommendations of smoke alarms in the bedrooms, outside bedrooms and on every level. They are in these areas because when you are sleeping, it is believed you do not smell.
- The smoke alarm alerts you to smoke in the air. Do not mount them near kitchen areas or bathrooms. A smoke alarm cannot tell the difference between smoke, humidity or everyday cooking.
- *Install new smoke alarms every 10 years.* Both battery and electric smoke alarms need to be changed because it is not about how they get their energy, but how long the sensor can sense smoke.
- *Install new batteries every 6 months; "change your clocks, change your batteries".*
- Test your smoke alarms monthly by pressing the test button.

- A smoke alarm *does not* replace the need for a CO alarm.

**Want to learn more??** Lowe's, the Home Safety Council and the SBM Fire Department is sponsoring "Safety Saturday" at Lowe's of Blaine 11651 ULYSESS STREET on September 19<sup>th</sup>, 10-2pm.

*The Spring Lake Park-Blaine-Mounds View Fire Department will be there to answer your home safety questions. There will be fun activities for the kids.*

**Your safety begins with prevention.**