

### **Questions & Sample Answers / ECHO-TV “CO and Smoke Alarms”**

(Recording Show: Tuesday, February 22/ 2-7 pm @ TPT)

#### **Smoke alarms**

##### **1. What is a smoke alarm and how does it save lives?**

- Alarms that alert people to get out of the house when there's smoke.
- 80 percent of fire victims die in homes without working smoke alarms.
- Half of home fire deaths occur in the six percent of homes without any smoke alarms.
- Having a working smoke alarm more than doubles your chances of surviving a fire

##### **2. Do most people have smoke alarms in their homes?**

- Yes, but many are not working, because they don't have fresh batteries, they're over ten years old or they're improperly installed.
- People might not have them in the right location, either.
- Never take the battery out, unplug, or ignore a smoke alarm.

##### **3. Exactly where should you put them?**

- Have at least one smoke alarm on each level of a home, and:
- One inside each bedroom
- One outside each bedroom or sleeping area
- Put them on the ceiling, if possible
- Otherwise, as high on the wall as possible.
- Avoid putting them near bathrooms, heating appliances, windows or ceiling fans — or too close to the kitchen

##### **4. What are the different types of smoke alarms and what's the best?**

- You should buy alarms that have been tested by a laboratory like UL.
- Smoke alarms can be hard-wired, battery powered, or a combination of both
- Combination of power sources is best.

- Also good to have a “pause” feature to reduce nuisance alarms. [Explain this] (However, if you get a lot of nuisance alarms, you may consider a different location for the alarm.)

## **5. How do I know if my apartment has enough alarms?**

- There should be an alarm in the hallway leading to the bedroom(s)
- There should be alarms in the hallways of the apartment building.
- If the building was built after July 10, 2007, alarms need to be in the bedroom hallway *and* in each bedroom.
- Call \_\_\_\_\_ if you have any questions

## **6. What should I do to maintain smoke alarms?**

- Change batteries every six months
- Test them monthly
- Gently vacuum them out with a soft brush every six months
- Replace them every 10 years

## **CO Alarms**

### **7. Where does CO come from?**

Sources of carbon monoxide include:

- unvented kerosene, propane and gas space heaters
- poorly-maintained furnaces
- charcoal grills
- gas water heaters
- woodstoves and fireplaces
- gas stoves
- automobile exhaust from cars

### **8. What can I do to try to keep it out of my house?**

- Have your central heating system inspected, cleaned and tuned-up every year
- Be sure flues are open when using your fireplace
- Make sure doors on woodstoves fit tightly
- Do not idle a car inside the garage—even if the garage is open. Pull the car out first.
- Never use a gas stove to heat your home

### **9. How do you tell the difference between CO poisoning and the flu?**

It could be CO poisoning if:

- You feel better when you're away from home
- People in the home get sick at the same time, not one after another
- Drowsiness/dizziness, headache, nausea/vomiting

#### **10. Why should we be concerned about CO?**

- Between 2000 and 2008, around 15 Minnesota residents died from unintentional, non-fire related CO poisoning each year.
- In that same time period, each year there were approximately 250 visits to the emergency department for unintentional, non-fire related CO poisoning in Minnesota.
- Because it has no smell or color, you need an alarm to tell you when CO is present

#### **11. What people are at especially high risk for CO poisoning?**

- Pregnant women
- Young children
- Senior citizens
- People with heart conditions

#### **12. Are CO alarms required in my home?**

Yes. Minnesota law requires that all single family and multi-family dwellings install an approved carbon monoxide alarm within ten feet of each bedroom.

#### **13. How do I choose a CO alarm?**

- U/L listed
- Plug-in with a battery backup is best
- Digital readout of CO concentrations if possible

#### **14. How about a combo smoke/CO alarm? Or can one of the alarms cover both dangers?**

- Avoid combo alarms—the two alarms wear out at different times
- CO alarms do not function as smoke alarms
- Smoke alarms do not function as CO alarms

#### **15. How long do CO alarms last?**

- Most last 5 to 7 years. See what the manufacturer recommends
- Some manufacturers recommend replacing them every 6 years

#### **16. What can parents do to make sure kids are prepared for fire and CO emergencies?**

- Have an escape plan and a meeting place—practice your plan
- Teach children about the fire and CO hazards in your home

- Make sure your family knows the symptoms of CO poisoning
- Teach family members about fire safety (don't play with matches; locate and learn to use fire extinguishers; how to call 911; "stop, drop and roll" if clothes catch fire.)
- Call 911 first—not a relative.
- Use caution with ritual candles.