

A p a r t m e n t

SAFETY NOTES



SPOKANE FIRE DEPARTMENT

JANUARY 2011



DETECTOR UPDATES

The Washington State Building Code Council has issued an updated schedule for requiring carbon monoxide detectors in new and existing residential units.

- By 1/1/11, CO alarms must be installed in all new residential occupancies where an attached garage or fuel-fired heat source is present.
- By 1/1/13, CO alarms must be installed in existing dwelling units in apartments, single-family residential units that are rented, motels and hotels where an attached garage or fuel-fired heat source is present.

Carbon monoxide is often referred to as “the silent killer” because the gas has no taste, color or odor. Symptoms of low-level CO poisoning (i.e. shortness of breath, mild nausea and headache) can be confused with food poisoning or the flu. Even moderate levels of CO exposure can cause death if headaches, dizziness, and nausea are ignored until the person is unable to respond. While statistics tend to focus on the number of persons who are hospitalized or die from CO exposure each year, there is less awareness of the long-term effects of CO poisoning. Memory loss, cognition problems, personality and behavioral changes as well as impaired coordination and vision can last for years.

Do some research on CO detectors so that the units you select will be a good match for tenants, budget and buildings. Before purchase, check to see what the manufacturer’s recommendations are in terms of placement. WA code will require CO alarms “outside each separate sleeping area in the vicinity of the bedroom.” Some detectors are installed as plug-ins near the floor. Others require a ceiling mount.

While smoke detectors must be replaced every 10 years, carbon monoxide detectors typically last only 5 to 7 years. Replacement dates should be indicated on the packaging. To track the life expectancy of each unit, it is wise to mark the expected replacement date on the back of every CO alarm.

It will also be important to teach your tenants about the function of the CO alarm and how to replace batteries as needed. CO alarms that cost a bit more have LED screens indicating the amount of CO in the air. These are a good investment because they provide an immediate indicator of the extent of CO toxins in the room. If the detector shows 9 parts or more of CO per million parts of oxygen, residents must evacuate.

The simplest advice: when a CO alarm sounds, the tenant should exit the home and call 9-1-1. The Fire Department will respond with testing equipment and may recommend a follow-up call to the landlord for furnace or

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other repairs. We are fortunate to have the technology in CO alarms needed to detect “the silent killer” before more lives are impaired or lost! (For more information on CO detectors, refer to our January 2010 edition of the Apartment Newsletter at www.spokanefire.org under Prevention.)

DISHWASHER WOES

New YEAR, New RESOLUTIONS

Too many tenants fail to recognize the benefit of Renter’s Insurance until they face a major loss. One way to welcome this New Year is to encourage every tenant to invest in themselves by contacting their insurance agent and setting aside about \$15 to cover a monthly renter’s insurance premium.

Many renters mistakenly believe that their landlord’s insurance will cover any of the tenant’s personal losses from fire. They also may be unaware of their own liability if they accidentally cause damage that impacts other tenants. One Spokane renter without renter’s insurance recently discovered this hard fact when presented with a \$410,000 bill for fire losses!

Resolve to have a simple handout on renter’s insurance as you welcome each new tenant as well as an annual reminder to every tenant of the value of renter’s insurance coverage. Not many belongings can be replaced with the \$120 to \$200 “saved” in annual renter’s insurance premiums!

You can sign up for this monthly newsletter, ask a fire-related question or suggest a specific safety topic by contacting Jan Doherty at jdoherty@spokanefire.org or by calling 625-7058.

Access this edition of Apartment Safety Notes as well as back issues at www.spokanefire.org under “Prevention”.

The December fire at a Spokane Valley Fire Station reminded us all of the importance of periodically checking the Consumer Product Safety Commission’s recall site at www.cpsc.gov. In the case of the firefighters, over 476,000 Bosch and Siemens dishwashers manufactured between May 1999 and July 2005 were recalled in January 2009 because electrical components could overheat. In addition, nearly 2 million other dishwashers were recalled in 2010 for electrical failures in heating elements. The brands include Maytag, Amana, Jenn-Aire, Magic Chef, Admiral and GE. You can find model numbers, photos and recall remedies at the CPSC website under Product Type / Dishwasher. **Safety Tip:** Don’t put the dishwasher on before going to sleep or leaving the house or fire station!



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There you will find links to our blog, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube pages!

