

# A p a r t m e n t

## SAFETY NOTES

SPOKANE FIRE DEPARTMENT

November 2012

### CHANGE- *and*- CHECK

Daylight Savings ends November 4 by giving us an extra hour to check on the condition of our smoke detectors! The simple slogan "Change your clock / change your battery" has more meanings now:

- Check the date of manufacture on the back of the smoke detector and replace any detector that is 10 years old.
- Make sure you have PHOTOELECTRIC detectors in each unit. Check out this investigative report from "The Today Show" at <http://video.today.msnbc.msn.com/today/49269880#49269880>.
- Replace alkaline batteries that are one year old. Check long-life lithium batteries to see if they are still operational.



### CO Detector Deadline

The deadline for installing carbon monoxide detectors in rental units is just around the corner on January 1, 2013. Three years ago, the Washington State legislature enacted RCW19.27.530 to address the ongoing concern of carbon monoxide poisoning. In order to help apartment owners and managers absorb the added expense of installing CO detectors, the original deadline was extended one year.

State guidelines require the placement of a CO detector on every level and outside every sleeping area. It is important to follow manufacturer guidelines when installing whichever unit you select. Some detectors are installed at ceiling level while others are plugged into outlets just a few feet from the floor. Since the carbon monoxide particles essentially distribute themselves evenly throughout the room, either placement is allowed. The expected life span of a CO detector varies between five and seven years, depending on the brand.

While some units combine smoke and carbon monoxide detecting functions in one device, you should know that smoke detectors are replaced every 10 years while CO detectors have a 5 to 7 year limit. If you select a dual sensor detector, check whether the smoke detector component is "ionization" or "photoelectric". Fire departments recommend at least one photoelectric detector on



each level of the living space because they can alert a resident from ten to forty minutes faster than ionization detectors in the slow-burning, smoldering types of fire commonly associated with electrical problems or smoking materials.

Some CO detectors contain small LED screens that indicate the parts per million of carbon monoxide to air. These are helpful for determining the current levels of CO exposure.

Educational list for residents:

- Unintentional, non-fire-related CO poisoning is a leading cause of poisoning in the U.S.
- CO results in about 20,000 emergency room visits a year and kills as many as 500 persons annually.
- On-going exposure to CO can cause serious neurological problems.
- State law requires **working** smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in every unit.
- Tenants are responsible for changing batteries when they chirp.
- Never try to heat the house with a gas oven.
- Never use a charcoal grill, camp stove or generator inside a building.
- Should the alarm sound, get everyone out of the unit and call 9-1-1.

---

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](mailto:jdoherty@spokanefire.org) or by calling (509)625-7058.

Back issues of Apartment Safety Notes can be accessed at [www.spokanefire.org](http://www.spokanefire.org) under "Prevention."

## GREAT AMERICAN SMOKEOUT

This one picture snapped at an apartment house (with vinyl siding) by Lt. Dan Walsh of Spokane County Fire District #9 should be worth 1,000 words! Smokers cause a significant percentage of residential fires. Cigarettes are the #1 cause of fire deaths in the U.S. each year. Predictably, many of these fires will be started by persons disposing of cigarette butts in plastic coffee cans and pop bottles or in potted plants filled with organic potting mix.

In addition to investigating the placement and status of ashtrays in your apartments, you can direct your tenants to interesting information from Spokane Regional Health District at [www.smokefreelivingspokane.org!](http://www.smokefreelivingspokane.org!)

SRHD is partnering with Thomas Hammer Coffee to help celebrate the Great American Smokeout on Thursday, November 15<sup>th</sup>. The first 350 customers at each Thomas Hammer location will receive a free 12-oz. cup of drip coffee!

Tobacco users can also visit the STA bus Plaza downtown on November 15 to receive a free "quit kit" with smoke cessation tips and resources.



Be sure to visit our website at [www.spokanefire.org](http://www.spokanefire.org)

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

