# Information packs

## How to protect yourself and others from carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning

Within this pack you'll learn about how you can protect yourself and others by installing an audible alarm and other products. This includes maintenance of the alarm and the relevant action to take in a situation.

**An affordable approach to protecting yourself and others**

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# CARBON MONOXIDE ALARMS

Because carbon monoxide has no taste, smell or colour. We strongly recommend you fit an audible carbon monoxide alarm in your home.

While an alarm will alert you to carbon monoxide in your home, it is no substitute for having an annual gas safety check and regular servicing by a registered engineer.

A carbon monoxide alarm looks similar to a smoke alarm and is very easy to fit by following the manufacturer's instructions. You can purchase a carbon monoxide alarm from £15 at your local DIY store, supermarket, energy supplier or engineer.

Before purchasing a carbon monoxide alarm, always make sure it is marked to EN 50291. It should also have the British Standards' Kitemark or another European approval organisation's mark on it. Follow the alarm manufacturer's instructions on siting, testing and replacing the alarm.

**You are particularly at risk from carbon monoxide poisoning while sleeping**, as you may not be aware of early carbon monoxide symptoms until it's too late. Do not use the 'black spot' detectors that change colour when carbon monoxide is present. These will not make a sound to wake you up if the poisonous gas is present while you are sleeping.

# MAINTENANCE OF THE ALARM

You can test a carbon monoxide detector to ensure it can identify the level of carbon monoxide (CO) in the air, measured in parts per million (ppm).

Pressing the 'Test' button on the detector will only tell you whether the device has adequate electrical power from an outlet or batteries. Follow the guidelines below to test your carbon monoxide detectors for accuracy.

**Step 1:  Test each CO detector**
Press the 'Test' button on each CO detector to ensure it is drawing electrical power. It will emit high-pitched, loud beeping, usually louder than a smoke detector.

**Step 2:  Test digital CO detectors with a low level CO source**

To confirm that a digital readout CO detector is detecting carbon monoxide, test it with a substance that will detect low levels of the gas, such as a lit incense wand. As you move the cigarette or wand within 8 inches of the CO detector, the digital display should change to register the presence of carbon monoxide. If the CO level detected is below 70 parts per million (ppm) the alarm will probably not go off. Should you have small children or people with respiratory problems living in your home, a level of 30 ppm can make them feel ill. Be sure to install at least 1 digital readout CO detector in your home.

**Step 3:  Use a CO detector test kit**

Carbon monoxide detector test kits can be purchased from most DIY stores. They include a small container full of gas at a high CO concentration, usually up to 1000 ppm and a plastic housing that you put around the detector for the test. The alarm will certainly sound during this test, so be prepared. However, this test proves only that your carbon monoxide detector will respond to a CO level well beyond the lethal range.

## WHAT TO DO IN AN EMEGENCY

Don't assume your gas appliances are safe: get a Gas Safe registered gas engineer to do a check. This is the only safe way to prevent yourself and those around you from incurring serious illness or death due to carbon monoxide exposure.

- Get fresh air immediately. Open doors and windows, turn off gas appliances and leave the house.
- See your doctor immediately or go to hospital - let them know that you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning.
- If you think there is immediate danger, call the Gas Emergency Helpline on 0800111999.
- Get a Gas Safe registered engineer to inspect your gas appliances and flues to see if there is a dangerous problem.