

Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors

by Fire Chief Shane Warner



As fall approaches we think of football, the changing weather, and losing an hour of sleep. But as you turn your clocks back on November 1 please also change your smoke and carbon monoxide detector batteries. Many smoke detectors are battery operated. Some are hard wired but also have a battery backup that needs to be changed so the detector will be operational when the power is out.



The Groveland Fire Department and the Groveland Kiwanis Club have teamed up to offer a program for seniors and people who cannot afford a smoke detector. One free smoke detector is available per household at the fire station. Over the years this program has donated many smoke detectors to the community.

Carbon monoxide poisoning is a danger for people who live in the mountains and use fuel burning appliances, such as gas and wood burning stoves. These need to be vented, and vents should be checked regularly to make sure they are not plugged. The fuel burning appliances need to be cleaned annually, checking flue pipes. Gas burning appliances need to be serviced by a professional to check that they are burning clean and efficiently. If these appliances are overlooked you might be at risk for carbon monoxide poisoning.

If you are exposed to carbon monoxide it enters the body and attaches itself to the hemoglobin in the blood and replaces life giving oxygen. This is especially deadly to people that have a pre-existing lung or circulatory problems. According to the Centers of Disease Control, carbon monoxide is the leading cause of deaths in American homes and because of increasing use of portable generators during power outages, deaths have doubled in recent years.

A big concern of mine is the false information out there that smoke alarms cannot detect carbon monoxide. Some smoke alarms do have carbon monoxide sensors but this type of smoke alarm tends to be more expensive. New in the marketplace is the carbon monoxide detector that uses electrochemical technology. This lessens the incident of false alarms caused by temperature or humidity changes or from vapors given off from household cleaners.

This new technology also allows the homeowner to purchase voice command activated carbon monoxide detectors that tell you what the danger is, where it is, and what to do, such as, "Get Out." Other features of these new units are a lighted display and a record of the maximum carbon monoxide exposure levels within the house. This is very helpful for rescue personnel if you are exposed to dangerous levels of carbon monoxide. When buying one of these units look for the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) certification on the unit and for its stated accuracy levels. As long as you use carbon based fuels, carbon monoxide will be a danger, but thanks to improved detection technology, your family can be protected.