

## Carbon Monoxide Tragedies Grow Life-Safety Market

*More state and local municipalities are now requiring CO detectors.*



More than 100 teens and adults were rushed from a Roanoke College dormitory in Salem, Va. to local hospitals on July 14, 2006, where they were treated for carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. The victims were staying at the dormitories while participating in either a conference or a six-week college prep program when CO started rising from the natural gas-powered water heater in the basement. A retired pastor attending the conference died in the dormitory, although the cause of his death is still under investigation. The dormitories did not have CO detectors.

CO is a colorless, odorless, tasteless and highly toxic gas that

strikes without warning. Known as the “silent killer,” it affects thousands of unsuspecting, unprepared people every year.

### Why the sudden stir about CO?

As technology advances, more and more people are buying CO-generating devices. Walking through residential or commercial dwellings, you are bound to find a flame-fueled device of some sort, including vehicles, charcoal grills, clothes dryers, engine-powered tools, fireplaces, gas/hot water heaters, gas/oil furnaces, gas space heaters, gas/wood-burning ovens/ranges, lanterns,

lawnmowers, pilot lights and portable generators — to name a few. However, with any appliance, old or new, there is risk of malfunctioning parts, improper installation or simply a buildup of dust and dirt to cause ventilation problems. These unanticipated problems can cause CO to kill without warning.

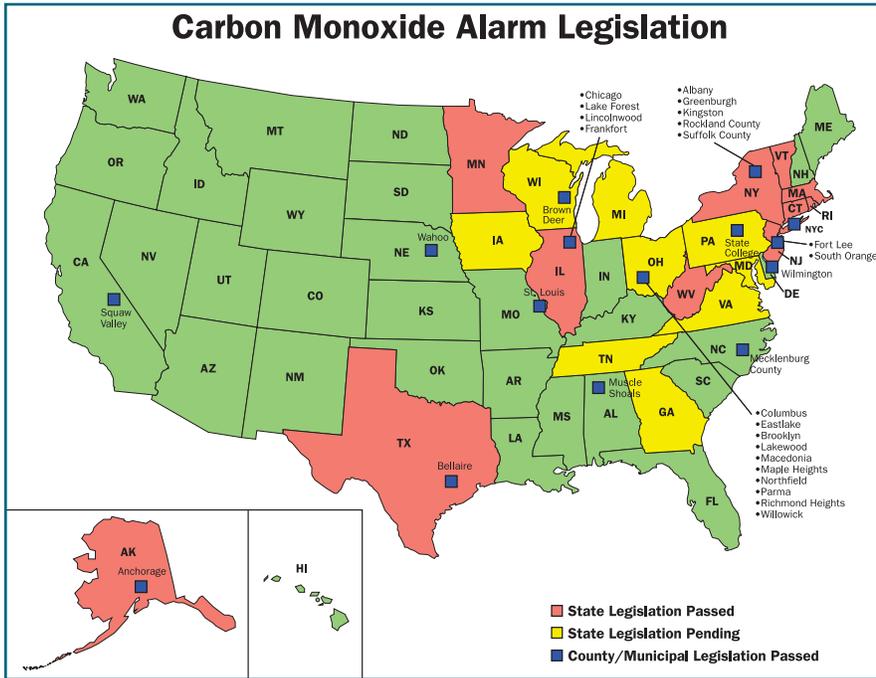
### What are states doing about it?

As tragedies, like Roanoke’s, spread and CO research continues to educate the world on the dangers of carbon monoxide, states and municipalities are passing legislation requiring CO detectors.

According to a 2006 NEMA<sup>1</sup> report, 10 states have already enacted state-wide CO legislation: Alaska; Connecticut; Massachusetts; New Jersey; New York; Rhode Island; Utah (building code provision); Vermont; West Virginia; and Texas (day care centers and group homes). (Subsequent press release updates include Illinois and Minnesota.)

According to the same report, many local jurisdictions throughout the following 16 states also require CO detection: Alaska; Alabama; Delaware; Illinois; Iowa; Kentucky; Massachusetts; Michigan; Missouri; Nebraska; New York; North Carolina; New Jersey; Ohio; Texas; and Wisconsin. Several other states and municipalities have legislation pending. For the most recent update, visit [www.systemsensor.com/CO](http://www.systemsensor.com/CO).

With legislation on the rise, check with the local Authority



**System monitoring provides extra protection and ease of mind when alone, not home or unable to respond.**

At 1 a.m., Geneva, Ill., residents Scott and Lisa Palese turned in for the night. They couldn't smell, taste or see the carbon monoxide that was pouring out of their basement furnace, up through their laundry shoot and into their second-story bedroom.

"We turned off our (battery powered) carbon monoxide detector about a month prior because it continually beeped," Lisa said. However, before doing so, the gas company and fire department confirmed the Palese's home did not contain carbon monoxide, and the manufacturer's customer service department failed to find a reason for the malfunctioning detector.

"Everybody (the Palese's three children, ages six, four and two) was asleep already, except for us, and we started to doze off — naturally," Lisa said. "And I said (to Scott), "Gosh, this is weird that we both have a headache. Do we have that carbon monoxide detector anywhere?"

When the Palese's put the battery back in the detector, the beeping was louder and more frequent than when it was malfunctioning. After opening the windows and calling the fire department, the Palese family was taken to the hospital and treated for carbon monoxide poisoning.

"The firemen told us if we would have just slept right through it (their headaches), we probably would not have woken in the morning," Lisa said. "That's a scary thought."

Having Jurisdiction for local CO detector requirements.

### How else can I protect myself from CO?

Although the most reliable protection against CO is via monitored CO detectors, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency<sup>2</sup> offers tactics to help avoid CO leaks, including:

- Have your fuel-burning appliances inspected by a trained professional at the beginning of every heating season. Make certain that the flues and chimneys are connected, in good condition and not blocked.
- Choose appliances that vent their fumes to the outside whenever possible, have them properly installed, and maintain them according to manufacturers' instructions.
- Read and follow all instructions that accompany any fuel-burning device. If you cannot avoid using an unvented gas or kerosene space heater, carefully follow the cautions that come with the device. Use the proper fuel and keep doors to the rest of the house open. Crack a window to ensure enough

air for ventilation and proper fuel-burning.

- Don't idle the car in a garage — even if the garage door to the outside is open. Fumes can build up quickly in the garage and living area of the home.
- Don't use a gas oven to heat your home, even for a short time.
- Don't use a charcoal grill indoors, even in a fireplace.
- Don't sleep in any room with an unvented gas or kerosene space heater.
- Don't use gasoline-powered engines (mowers, weed trimmers, snow blowers, chain saws, small engines or generators) in enclosed spaces.

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1. The National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA), "Recommended Policies: State and Local Legislation and Ordinances for Carbon Monoxide Life Safety Devices," April 2006. [http://www.nema.org/prod/elec/sig/upload/carbon\\_monoxidepolicy2006.doc](http://www.nema.org/prod/elec/sig/upload/carbon_monoxidepolicy2006.doc).

2. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Indoor Environments Division (6607J) Office of Air and Radiation, "Protect Your Family and Yourself from Carbon Monoxide Poisoning," October 1996. <http://www.epa.gov/iaq/pubs/cofsbt.html#Prevention%20is%20the%20Key%20to%20Avoiding%20Carbon%20Monoxide%20Poisoning>.