Guide to Carbon Monoxide Alarms

What is a Carbon Monoxide alarm?

A small often portable audible electronic unit for use in the home to detect Carbon Monoxide (CO)

Carbon monoxide alarms are designed and programmed to monitor the ambient air and give an audible alarm when it detects potentially dangerous levels of carbon monoxide

Alarms alert occupants to high levels of CO which require immediate action and warn of low levels of CO for prolonged periods of time.

What to look for in a Carbon Monoxide Alarm:

CoGDEM recommends that you use an audible electronic CO alarm to detect Carbon Monoxide in your home. Alarms can be battery or mains powered, are easy to install and are very accurate and reliable. CO alarms save lives from this deadly poisonous gas that can occur in homes, offices, places of work, schools and hotels.

CO alarms should be tested and certified to the latest European standard—EN50291 and must have a CE mark. Look for the British Standards Kitemark or LPCB logos on packaging and alarms. CoGDEM does NOT recommend the use of CO patches / indicators as these will not wake you when CO is present.

Where to buy alarms:

CO alarms are widely available from DIY stores, Supermarkets, High Street Stores, Chemists, internet and Gas Retailers. EN50291 alarms start from £15 up to £40 depending on additional features such as digital display, type and length of battery life, memory and guarantee period.

How many alarms do I need?

One per household is usually enough as CO will move with the air around the house and can penetrate plaster and brick walls. However if you have more than one fuel burning appliance especially if on different floors then additional alarms would be advised.

How do I use and alarm and where do I put it?

Always read the manufacturers instructions when installing an alarm. Place the alarm in the rooms that you spend most time in say lounge or bedroom or in the same room as appliances. Battery and plug-in alarms are quick and easy to install, mains powered alarms required a Part P qualified electrician to install them.

Alarms should be tested according to the user manual and replaced at their end of life, around 5 to 6 years.

Recommended CO alarm manufacturers with proven quality EN alarms: