



False alarms
How they affect
your safety



Gas and fire
Protecting yourself
from “The Silent Killer”

**MEDIA
PLANET**

November 2012

HOME SAFETY & SECURITY

3
FACTS
ESSENTIAL HOME
SAFETY
INFORMATION
FOR YOU

PROTECTING WHAT MATTERS TO YOU

Property Brothers Drew & Jonathan Scott speak
about keeping your home and family safe.

Securing your home

The holiday season is a busy time of year for many, especially for those looking to make a profit. Thieves who target residential homes are looking for valuable items that they can turn over quickly for some cash, and at this time of year gifts can be the easiest grab. However, no matter the time of year, break-ins are a reality.

While the prevalence of police-reported crimes continues to decrease in Canada, in 2011 break-ins were one of the most common forms of property crime in Canada. Police reported over 181,200 break-ins, with more than 6 in 10 (63 percent) of break-ins occurring in residential areas. Installing a security system in your home is your best option to ensuring your safety and security.

Who should you turn to?
When one chooses to outfit their home with a security system, a

number of questions often arise. What steps should I take to find an alarm system? How can I reduce the risk of false alarms? Will my alarm system be compatible with new technologies?

Keeping your home safe and secure begins with knowing who to turn to. Security professionals play an important role in your home protection plan. The Canadian Security Association (CANASA) represents more than 1300 security organizations across Canada, including Canadian Accredited Security Contractor (CASC) Companies, monitoring companies, and consultants.

Choosing the system that's right for you
Your security system should be tailored to meet both your specific security needs and your budget. Ensure that the security company visits your home to perform a site



JF Champagne
Executive Director,
Canadian Security
Association (CANASA)

inspection and security audit before you commit to any purchases. The company should provide you with an evaluation of your premises, and explain how you can improve your home's security beyond the addition of an electronic alarm system.

When choosing an alarm company, be sure to consult a minimum of three alarm companies. When comparing companies, be sure to compare the number and types of products to be installed. If there is a discrepancy, make sure you understand the difference between the security systems offered. Lastly, find out how long the security company has been in business, and ask to see evidence of the

company's expertise and employee training. If you are consulting an electronic security contractor company, find out if the company is accredited through the Canadian Accredited Security Contractor (CASC) program.

Electronic security companies are constantly changing and upgrading their equipment to accommodate mobile and tablet devices for people on the go, and must stay up to date on the latest security industry products and trends. Your chosen electronic security company should work with you to create a security plan that best suits your lifestyle and requirements.

The spectre of false alarms
Once you have installed an alarm system, many homeowners often deal with false alarms, something that is entirely preventable. Ensuring that your alarm system is easily accessible from the

exit point and the arming delay is set for a reasonable period allow you with enough time to exit your household before the system arms.

Alongside this, requesting annual maintenance inspections to ensure your security system is performing properly and keeping your alarm monitoring station's "call list" updated will make it easier for you and your monitoring station to ensure your safety.

Keeping you and your family safe this holiday season and year round begins with taking the right precautionary steps. This report aims to provide you with the tips, tricks, and tools to ensuring that you sleep soundly in your home.

To learn more about CANASA and find a security professional near you, visit canasa.org.

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INSIGHT

THE PROPERTY BROTHERS

Drew and Jonathan Scott are well known on TV as “The Property Brothers”. They help their clients create masterpieces from neglected pieces of real estate that most people consider to be down-and-out. In the process the two brothers have picked up a few things about ensuring that their newly transformed homes stay safe and secure.

■ **What makes you passionate about home renovation?**
Even though we have bought/renovated/sold over 50 homes for ourselves and hundreds for clients, we still LOVE seeing what a huge difference we can make in a place. Taking something buyers run away from and transforming it into a dream home that purchasers line up to buy! It’s just a great outlet for our creativity.

■ **What aspects of security are important for home buyers to keep in mind?**
Never fall in love with one aspect of a home, like the kitchen then turn a blind eye to potential hazards. The biggest factor we see is probably location. If the potential home is close to busy streets and commercial areas, you may be more likely to have thefts and break-ins. This can also be the case with dark

Education is key. Know concerns in your area. Always get an inspection whether the home is old or new, work with professionals that can ensure you get into a home that is safe and secure.

Jonathan and Drew Scott
Giving their best recommendations on home safety.

streets and houses that are hidden from public view. Do your research and ensure you know the area you are looking to buy in. Visit the property at various times throughout the day to see if traffic patterns and pedestrian movement are a problem for you. It’s inevitable that if you really want to be in that downtown location, you’re going to have a higher crime rate. But you can take simple steps to prevent your house from being a target.

■ **Why should security be considered during renovation/reconstruction or can you**

incorporate it afterwards?
While the walls are open it is very easy to run lines for additional exterior lighting, hard wired alarm systems and other home security features. Also, consider what type of doors and windows you are putting on the ground level. If you have a massive glass door on the front, can people see in easily? It may also be easier to break in. There is a special type of clear plastic film you can apply to glass doors and windows that prevents it from being smashed. This is a great additional bit of security. Ensure you have lots of light around the property by using flood-lights on a motion sensor. Try to limit the amount of ‘hiding places’ you have around your property such as overgrown bushes, sheds and piles of trash. The more things you can do to make your home an unsavory target, the better.

■ **How can maximizing the safety & security of your home increase the value?**
Maximizing security gives buyers piece of mind. If you can show that renovations were done right; the home looks good AND is safe and secure then buyers will be willing to pay more. As soon as buyers start to have second thoughts about safety it puts a stigma in their mind about the whole property. Also, if you have paid extra for security items like a high quality lock, brag about it with a placard during the listing.

■ **Do you have any personal or client experiences where safety & security was a primary concern?**
Yes, we have heard many horror stories with clients who tried listing the house themselves and the wife had to do showings with complete strangers all alone. This is a big safety concern and is really putting yourself in a dangerous situation. We’ve talked with people who had purchased a house for a great price because it was a marijuana grow-op, understanding that there was a lot of renovation work to do to resolve the mold issues. One thing they didn’t realize is that they continued to get random druggies showing up at all hours of the night for over a year. Something to think about.

■ **What are some typical facets of safety & security that new homeowners typically overlook?**
The biggest safety hazards in the home surround fire & structure, so check to ensure there aren’t any gas leaks, exposed or poorly run wires,

FACT 1

GETTING AN ALARM SYSTEM IS ONLY THE FIRST STEP TO SECURING YOUR HOME; FIND OUT WHAT ELSE YOU CAN DO BELOW.

TRANSFORMING HOMES

Drew & Jonathan Scott, Co-hosts of Property Brothers and Buying and Selling

Jonathan is a licensed contractor and Drew a seasoned agent and together, they have been personally investing in real estate for more than 15 years. Their real estate investment firm, Scott Real Estate Inc., oversees the sales and construction of residential and commercial properties.

PHOTO: CINEFLIX MEDIA INC.

or combustibles around the furnace. Keeping up to date with your appliances is important, outdated furnace/appliances or improperly vented gas appliances can lead to dangerous leaks. Investigating the structural integrity of your home is a factor in ensuring that there are no cracks in the foundation that could result in moisture penetration in your basement that will breed mold.

For security, have quality locks on gates, doors & windows. Also ensure they can’t just be pushed in as is the case with improperly installed doors. An affordable, easy security option is to install automatic lights for your yard, however the staple for every home should be a security system. Monitored or unmonitored systems can still be great to ward off unwanted visitors. And of course, checking in with your neighbours! Knowing you have great neighbours that will always have an eye out for your place is a huge benefit.

■ **What are the top 3 safety concerns that homeowners should be proactive/aware of?**
There are many but we would suggest these:

■ **Solid foundation**—Look for DIY framing, cracks in foundation and settling. These should be addressed early to prevent further problems.

■ **Excessive moisture**—esthetically this can cause warping walls, con-

densation in windows, musty smell. It is also a health risk, since mold can cause allergies and breathing problems

■ **CO2 is a silent killer.** Ensure you have smoke and CO2 detectors at least on each level and check/swap the batteries every 6 months. One area to check is your attached garage to see if there are any holes in the walls or air leaks through the door leading into the home. These gaps can allow carbon monoxide into the home.

■ **Is there a room or appliance in the home that is considered the “most dangerous” and how can owners make it safer?**
Old fireplaces that haven’t been cleaned properly can result in a fire. Also, an old furnace that isn’t vented properly can result in CO2 seeping into the home. In either case, have a pro come service them.

■ **If there is one thing you could tell Canadians about Safety & Security, what would it be?**
Education is key. Know concerns in your area. Always get an inspection whether the home is old or new, work with professionals that can ensure you get into a home that is safe and secure.

Property Brothers airs Tuesdays at 8 pm on W Network and Buying and Selling with The Property

TIMOTHY RECARD
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WE RECOMMEND

Stephen Gamble
President of the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs (CAFC)

PAGE 5

“You have less than three minutes to escape a fire. So when smoke alarms sound, everyone must know what to do and where to go.”

Carbon Monoxide p. 5
Protecting yourself from this dangerous gas

Radon Gas p. 6
This invisible, radioactive gas could be hiding in your basement

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Creating a child-friendly home

CHILDREN’S SAFETY

Our houses are generally furnished with adults in mind and thus create hazards for children. Indeed, most injuries to young children occur in their homes.

According to Safe Kids Canada, a program of Parachute, more than 20,000 children are seen in Canada’s emergency departments each year for injuries that happened at home. These home injuries most commonly include:

■ **Falls**—This preventable injury currently accounts for more than half the injuries. Most often, children fall from furniture and stairs and sometimes through windows.

■ **Burns**—Are usually caused by hot liquids or tap water. Scald burns can lead to long hospitalization stays and lifelong treatment.

Kristen Gane
Program Manager, Parachute

■ **Poisoning**—This is most often from medication, household cleaning products and personal care products.

■ **Choking**—Is typically caused when eating food. Strangulation is most often caused by entanglement in window blind cords.

■ **Drowning**—Most often occurs in bathtubs and home swimming pools.

Prevent your baby from falling
Babies’ heads are large compared to the rest of their bodies, making them more likely to fall, particularly as they begin to wiggle, kick and roll. Falling from change tables, cribs or high chairs can cause serious injuries. Reduce the risks:

■ Keep one hand on your baby while he or she is on the change table.

■ Place car seats, carriers and rockers on the floor.

■ Bolt safety gates to the wall at the top and bottom of stairs.

■ Place cribs, beds and other furniture away from windows and balconies. Ensure doors to balconies are kept locked.

■ Use window guards or stops on windows above the first floor, which will prevent a window from opening more than 10 cm. Window guards should have a release mechanism so they can be fully opened in case of an emergency.

Window blinds and cords
Between 1989 and 2009, 27 children died and 23 children were injured when they became entangled in window blind cords, Health Canada reports. Here’s how to prevent these injuries:

■ Cut blind cords short and tie them out of reach.

■ Keep cribs, beds, high chairs and playpens away from blind or curtain cords.

■ Use cordless window coverings.

Television topples
More than 100 children visit emergency departments every year in Canada due to toppling televisions.

■ Keep your TVs on low, sturdy furniture.

■ Use safety products to secure the TV—anchors, angle-braces or furniture straps.

Burns

■ Place a barrier around your fireplace and closely supervise your child when the fireplace is on.

■ Keep your hot water taps at no more than 49C to prevent scalds or buy anti-scald or shut-off devices for your taps.

Poisoning

■ Keep all potential poisons and medications stored away in locked boxes or cabinets out of your child’s reach.

Drowning

■ When babies or toddlers are in water, always stay within arm’s reach.

■ Pools should have fences around all four sides and self-locking, self-latching gates.

Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors

■ Most child deaths in fires occur in homes without working smoke detectors. Install smoke detectors on every level of the home and in each sleeping area. Test alarms monthly and change batteries annually.

■ A carbon monoxide detector can alert your family to the presence of this toxic, odourless gas. Test detectors monthly and change batteries annually.

KRISTEN GANE,
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INSIGHT

Question: False alarms lower the likelihood of a police response to your emergency, how can you limit false alarms so you never cry wolf?

Answer: Picking an alarm company with an enhanced call verification system and taking proactive steps will help you to reduce false alarms.

FACT

2

IN 2011 BREAK-INS WERE ONE OF THE MOST COMMON FORMS OF PROPERTY CRIME IN CANADA.

Preventing false alarms to ensure timely response to emergencies

IMPROVING RESPONSE TIME

Installing an electronic security system can be one of the best steps you take in securing your home. However, it is extremely important to maintain proper use and care of your alarm system. Security systems that are not installed or used correctly may trigger a false alarm, which can result in an unnecessary dispatch of emergency response personnel.

User error is the number one cause of false alarms. False alarms not only put unwarranted pressure on emergency response services, but can result in fines for homeowners. Frequent false alarms may also impact false alarm by-laws in your region.

When choosing to install an alarm in your home, make sure to follow these tips to reducing your risk of

triggering false alarms:

- Understand your alarm system**
Knowing how to properly operate and maintain your security system is your best tool. Ask your alarm installer to train you and other users when your alarm is being installed. Often times, it is other users that are unfamiliar with your system that trigger false alarms. By ensuring that all users know both the passcode for your system and your monitoring station's phone number in case the alarm is accidentally set off, you can create a safe environment for everyone.
- Maintain your monitoring station's "call list"**
Monitoring stations can be proactive in determining if emergency response

teams should be dispatched to your home in the case of an alarm, if they have the correct contact information. Make sure to keep your monitoring station's "call list" up to date with current phone numbers for you and your contacts.

■ Ask your monitoring station about Enhanced Call Verification (ECV)
Enhanced Call Verification (ECV) for security systems can help to reduce false dispatches. A monitoring station instructed to use ECV will try to get in touch with two or more contacts to confirm an alarm's validity before issuing a first responder dispatch. According to the False Alarm Reduction Association (FARA), communities that require ECV have seen emergency response to false alarms

reduced by 30 to 50 percent.

- Schedule an annual inspection of your alarm**
Request annual maintenance inspections for your security system to ensure proper performance. Replacing your system's battery every three to five years is the first step in taking a proactive approach.
- Monitor activity in your home**
Before making changes to your home, including renovations, contact your alarm company to ensure these changes will not affect your system and possibly trigger a false alarm. Ask to have a cancel signal installed should you accidentally trigger a false alarm. In the event a false alarm does occur, there are certain measures your alarm company can take to verify the

seriousness of the alarm. Informed two way response is an important step in the verification process. Through the use of camera's, radio, cellphone's, and tablets alarm companies now have a wide assortment of tools to reach you. These tools will help your alarm company to confirm whether there has been a break in and dispatch resources accordingly. 2 way response verification has allowed companies to lower false alarm rates, and ensure that emergencies are responded to effectively.

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10 Reasons Why AlarmForce Should Protect Your Home:



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9. No other company's lawn sign scares burglars off like AlarmForce!
10. AlarmForce **Protects over 250,000 People** across North America!

HOME ALARM

\$0 DOWN & \$25/MONTH

1. No other home alarm company comes close to AlarmForce's value! Now more than ever your money needs to go further, which is why there's no better choice than AlarmForce to protect your home and family. With AlarmForce you get the best security at the best price!
2. With Live Two-Way Voice monitoring when someone breaks into your house a siren goes off, then a real-time link is established between your home and the AlarmForce Central Station, where through a speaker in your house the intruder will hear the voice of a live person say "ATTENTION! THIS IS THE ALARMFORCE CENTRAL STATION! IDENTIFY YOURSELF! THE AUTHORITIES HAVE BEEN DISPATCHED". Nothing scares a burglar out of your house faster than the voice of a live person. Plus, we can hear what's happening inside the house, so if there is an emergency, we can relay that information to the police, who may then prioritize their response and get there faster!
3. Other companies charge for installation, activation and even warranties! At AlarmForce we want to give our customers the best value, so installation, activation and warranty are all FREE!
4. Live Two-Way Voice Monitoring means a real-time connection between your home and the AlarmForce Central Station. This live



response lets AlarmForce react to any situation at your house quicker and more effectively than a traditional home alarm.

5. With other home alarm companies, once you sign a contract, they can (and will) raise your monitoring rates far higher than what you originally signed for. With AlarmForce, we haven't changed our monitoring rates in 20 years and guarantee that your rates will remain locked during the course of your contract.

6. Other companies try to get a salesperson to your house, so they can pressure you into signing a contract and purchase unnecessary extra equipment. At AlarmForce we will never send a salesperson to your house, instead simply call 1-800-267-2001 and one of our well trained Sales Experts will be able to answer all of your questions with no pressure at all.
7. AlarmForce, unlike competitors, does not outsource our monitoring to a third party. Rather, all

AlarmForce home alarm systems are monitored and serviced by AlarmForce. This way we can guarantee higher quality service and a better response.

8. Only available from AlarmForce, VideoRelay™ is AlarmForce's newest system and has contributed in apprehensions of many burglars. See and speak to whoever is at your front door through your cell phone from anywhere in the world! Inside the VideoRelay™ is a camera, speaker and microphone, so whenever someone approaches an e-mail is sent with three pictures of who is there. Then you can watch a live video stream and talk through your phone to whoever is there through a speaker in the VideoRelay™ unit. Add VideoRelay™ to your home alarm for only \$99* up front and then just \$10 more per month!

9. Nothing scares a burglar more than an AlarmForce home alarm which is why there is no better deterrent value than an AlarmForce lawn sign and stickers. Protect your house with the most trusted name in home security, and the system that burglars avoid, AlarmForce!

10. We protect families across North America with the best protection at the best price. The fact we provide the best value in home security is why we are the most trusted name in home security!

*Limited time offer.

NO OTHER COMPANY COMES CLOSE TO OUR VALUE

What Our Customers Say About Us:

"I have been a customer with AlarmForce for the past six years and they have always been there when we needed them. They have saved our home from being broken into several times"

– Ken, Brantford ON

"With AlarmForce I know my wife and son are in good hands with their 2-way voice communication, line-cut technology and their new VideoRelay."

– Lucas, Victoria Harbour BC

"I switched to Alarm Force from another company who wanted over \$1000. to upgrade. AlarmForce installed a better system at no charge."

– Irwin, Toronto ON

"We had an AlarmForce security system installed at our home a number of years ago, we have felt very protected and secure. The recent addition of VideoRelay at the front door, it's even better."

– Brad, Midhurst ON

A KIDDE CANADA EDUCATIONAL FEATURE

A first for Canada:

The Home Depot Canada offers new smoke and carbon monoxide **alarms that are smarter and last longer.**

Canada’s leading smoke alarm company and the country’s leading big box hardware retailer have teamed up to simplify home safety.

Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms silently go about their business day-in and day-out. But they don’t last forever — all alarms wear out, just like most other household devices.

When it comes time to replace them, the rule is: replace smoke alarms every 10 years and CO alarms every 7 years. But, what if you have purchased a combination alarm that offers protection from both smoke and carbon monoxide in the same model? What is the replacement rule then?

Intelligent alarms

Alarm market leader Kidde Canada has recently introduced two advanced combination smoke and CO alarms - a Canadian first! Available exclusively at The Home Depot, these new “intelligent” combo alarms react more quickly to real fires while at the same time better differentiating between false alarms and the real thing. One unit is battery powered, the other is hardwired with a battery backup in case of a power outage.



The Home Depot and Kidde New Kidde advanced combination smoke and CO alarms are available exclusively at The Home Depot.

These new advanced combination alarms take direct aim at a major consumer complaint of all alarms — they go off too easily if you burn the toast or have a shower that throws off too much steam.

They also solve the replacement issue that used to exist with combination smoke and carbon monoxide alarms: the CO sensors in these new alarms are the first in Canada to be certified to last 10 years...the same as smoke alarms.

“Innovations that make alarms smarter, less intrusive, and last over 40 percent longer is why Kidde remains the brand Canadians choose most,” says Carol Heller, a home safety specialist with the company. “When it comes to protecting your family, the best technology is the best investment you can make.”

Learn more about these new combination alarms and other safety devices at www.homedepot.ca.
SOURCE: The Home Depot Canada

THE HOME DEPOT CANADA
editorial@mediaplanet.com

HOME SAFETY: TRUE OR FALSE

- Think you know about fire and carbon monoxide safety? Take this short home safety quiz to test your knowledge!
- 1

Smoke and CO alarms last forever whether hardwired, plug in or battery powered

☐ T ☐ F
- 2

CO alarms must be installed on the ceiling, like smoke alarms

☐ T ☐ F
- 3

There are two types of smoke alarms, each with different sensing technology

☐ T ☐ F
- 4

There is dangerous radioactive material in smoke alarms

☐ T ☐ F
- 5

It is illegal to throw out a smoke or CO alarm into the regular garbage

☐ T ☐ F
- 6

Having working smoke alarms increases your chance of escaping a fire by 50 percent

☐ T ☐ F
- 7

On average, you have under three minutes to escape a fire before it reaches ‘flashover’

☐ T ☐ F

Answers on page 6

INCREASING HOME SAFETY

Canada’s largest smoke alarm donation

 Len Garis, Fire Chief, Surrey BC and Shirley Bond, BC’s Minister of Justice and Attorney General, helped to acknowledge Canada’s largest-ever smoke alarm donation in support of a provincial fire safety campaign that aims to put a working smoke alarm in every BC residence. Kidde Canada, the country’s leading alarm manufacturer, donated 5,000 smoke alarms to help kick-off the campaign. Donated alarms are destined for at-risk BC communities including First Nations and Food Bank recipients.

PHOTO: SAFEATHOME.CA



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- **SEE THE DANGER:** Canada’s only digital “continuous display” carbon monoxide alarm

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Carbon Monoxide alarms after 7-10 years

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NEWS

Simple steps that will keep your family safe at home

FACT

3

COOKING FIRES ARE THE #1 CAUSE OF HOME FIRES

For most Canadians, home fires and exposure to carbon monoxide are things that don't "happen to them."

But in real life, fires do occur and gas-fired devices do fail. Leaving innocent families frightened, traumatized or in even worse condition.

Have you taken all the steps necessary to protect your family? Research and fire departments say likely not. It seems many of us remain ill-prepared for a fire and, when it comes to carbon monoxide poisoning, are borderline oblivious.

Smoke alarms

Estimates suggest 20 percent (or more) of homes lack the most basic fire safety tool, a smoke alarm. Even more homes have alarms with no batteries, are past their prime, or that have been taken down because of burned toast or shower steam.

Hit TV shows such as Seinfeld and Modern Family have made fun of false alarms. But having a fire and not having a working smoke alarm is not funny at all, in fact it can be very dangerous.

Take these steps to protect your family:

- Maximize your escape time by installing a smoke alarm on every storey of your home and outside all sleeping areas. Sleep with bedroom doors closed? Install alarms inside.
- Smoke alarms wear out! Replace them every 10 years whether battery operated or hardwired.
- There are two types of smoke alarms, Ionization and Photoelectric. Ionization alarms are a bit cheaper



MEETING OF THE CHIEFS Canada's Fire Chiefs, along with Sparky the Fire Dog and Newfoundland Fire Safety Ambassadors Caroline and Bradley, gathered recently in St. John's to kick-off Fire Prevention Week and a focus on having "Two Ways Out" of any home in case of fire. PHOTO: SAFEATHOME.CA

but are most likely to sound a false alarm, so install them in general living areas. Install Photoelectric alarms near kitchens or bathrooms to radically reduce false alarms.

- Never tamper with alarms. Install Photoelectric models to reduce false alarms or models with a Hush button that quiets the alarm while you clear the air.
- When a smoke alarm sounds, there's no time for confusion. Create a home escape plan that shows two ways out of every room if possible, and pick an outside meeting place. Practice it regularly, especially if you have kids or aging parents living with you.

Carbon monoxide

About 60 percent of Canadians do not have a CO alarm. But if you have even one potential source of carbon monoxide gas in your home, take these steps to protect your family:

- Carbon monoxide poisoning is a four-season threat. If you have a wood-burning or gas fireplace, a gas water heater, any type of gas appliance, or a garage or carport attached to your house you NEED a CSA-approved CO alarm. One per storey is recommended, having one outside sleeping areas is a must.
- Low-level exposure to CO mimics symptoms of the flu, without the fever. Never assume you're just "under

the weather" if you feel nauseous, listless or light-headed.

- CO alarms with a digital display show you if low levels of carbon monoxide are present BEFORE concentrations are high enough to set it off. Pick models with a continuous display, rather than those that make you push a button... they make it easier to see that all is well.

For more fire and carbon monoxide safety tips, escape plan templates and special product rebates, go to www.safeathome.ca.

SOURCE: SAFEATHOME.CA
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CARBON MONOXIDE "THE SILENT KILLER"

Do you have gas appliances or water heaters? A gas or oil furnace? Do you enjoy fires in a wood-burning or gas fireplace? Is your garage or carport attached to your house?

If you answered yes to any one of these, you need to learn the facts about carbon monoxide—and you need to install a CSA-approved CO alarm.

Often called "The Silent Killer," carbon monoxide is odourless, tasteless and invisible. If not vented properly, or if fuel-fired appliances or heating devices malfunction, CO can cause nausea and confusion, debilitating physical and mental issues and, ultimately, death.

Despite ongoing warnings from safety officials, thousands of Canadians are exposed to carbon monoxide each year and some die. The ONLY way humans can detect deadly CO is with a CSA-approved carbon monoxide alarm.

No one understands that better than Ontario resident, John Gignac. At Christmas 2008 Gignac, a retired firefighter, lost his niece, her husband and their two children to carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. A blocked chimney vent forced the deadly gas from their gas fireplace back into their home. In response, he established the Hawkins-Gignac Foundation for CO Education and spends his retirement educating others about the sources of carbon monoxide in the home and ways to protect your family from the deadly gas.

"My niece Laurie Hawkins and her



FOUNDATION EDUCATES ABOUT "THE SILENT KILLER" John Gignac joins Oxford MPP Ernie Hardeman in support of a mandatory CO Law in Ontario. PHOTO: ENDTHE SILENCE.CA

family had no chance because they did not have a CO alarm," Gignac says. "If they did, they would still be with us today."

Gignac says misunderstanding and underestimating the threat of carbon monoxide is a family's biggest mistake.

"I have spoken to dozens of groups and hundreds of people and they all say the same thing. 'I don't need a CO alarm because I have electric heat.' But when I ask them if they have a gas appliance or water heater, or a wood-burning or gas fireplace, or a garage or attached carport they all get a horri-

fied look on their face. Their families have been at risk for years."

The Foundation offers these five CO safety steps:

- Have a licensed inspector check heating systems and all fuel-burning appliances, including fireplaces, every year
- Install one CSA-approved CO alarm on each storey of your home and outside all sleeping areas
- Keep clear all exhaust flues and ducts and check outside for obstructions
- Replace CO alarms every 7-10

years depending on the manufacturer, whether battery operated or hardwired

- Change CO alarm batteries at least once a year

"Most CO alarms cost around \$30, just about 2 cents a day over their lifespan. That's a small price to pay for your family's safety," Gignac adds.

For more carbon monoxide safety tips, visit www.endthesilence.ca.

SOURCE: ENDTHE SILENCE.CA
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DON'T MISS!



Stephen Gamble
President of the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs (CAFC)

"Fall back" to smart home safety

Most Canadians turned back their clocks this past weekend, a perfect time to review some timely smoke and carbon monoxide safety tips:

- ➔ We are accustomed to changing the batteries in our alarms with the time change, but also check the AGE of your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms as well. Smoke alarms must be replaced every 10 years, and CO alarms every 7-10 years depending on the manufacturer. This is true for battery operated alarms and those hardwired into your home's electrical system.
- ➔ Install one smoke alarm on every storey of your home and outside sleeping areas. If you sleep with bedroom doors closed, install smoke alarms right inside each bedroom.
- ➔ If your home has any fuel-fired devices such as a gas furnace, water heater or stove or a wood or gas fireplace, or a garage or attached carport, you should install a CSA-approved carbon monoxide alarm on each storey of your home. At a minimum, install one CO alarm outside sleeping areas.
- ➔ You have less than three minutes to escape a fire. So when smoke alarms sound, everyone must know what to do and where to go. Creating and practising a home escape plan is essential.
- ➔ Never take out batteries or remove a smoke alarm from the ceiling due to a nuisance alarm. Look for models with a "Hush" button that allows you to silence a false alarm and stay safe while you clear the air. Also consider installing a Photoelectric smoke alarm near kitchens and bathrooms where cooking smoke and shower steam are present. Photoelectric alarms are less prone to false alarms.

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CHALLENGES

Radon—an invisible radioactive gas is **the second leading cause of lung cancer in Canada**—and it could be hiding in your basement.

Protecting yourself from radon can be easy

Radon is a gas that is easy to ignore. Its colourless, odourless and tasteless nature makes it easy for radon to go unnoticed but it is not something that should be taken lightly. It is a radioactive gas and can cause serious health problems.

The Radiation Safety Institute of Canada wants to raise awareness and detection rates of radon. President and CEO of the institute, Steven Mahoney, said: “The public are not as aware of radon as they should be. Because it is hard to detect it often gets dismissed.”

What is radon?

Radon occurs naturally and is formed when uranium breaks down in soil, rock and water. In the outdoor air, radon is heavily diluted so its concentration is not hazardous, but when it enters homes, schools or workplaces the concentration levels can build up and it can become a threat to human health.

Mahoney explained: “When this radioactive gas gets attached to dust and then gets inhaled it can get lodged in the lungs. Over time this build-up can lead to lung cancer.”

“Research by Health Canada estimates that 16 percent of lung cancer deaths among Canadians are attributable to indoor radon exposure, making radon gas the second leading cause of lung cancer after tobacco smoking,” said Kelley Bush, Head of Radon Education and Awareness, Health Canada.



“It should not be ‘out of sight, out of mind.’ It is the obligation of the homeowner or employer to do a test to check their levels of radon.”

Hon. Steven W Mahoney, PC
President and CEO, Radiation Safety Institute of Canada

Radon can enter homes through the cracks in foundations or other unsealed openings. Mahoney said: “It’s insidious but it is not hard to protect your home against it, it’s a solvable problem. It should not be ‘out of sight, out of mind.’ It is the obligation of the homeowner or employer to do a

test to check their levels of radon.” Health Canada recommends that radon concentration levels should be taken in the heating season (October to April) because, as Mahoney explains: “Radon levels tend to be higher in winter months because homes are sealed up and there is a lack of ventilation.”

FACTS

■ 16 percent

of lung cancer deaths among Canadians are attributable to indoor radon exposure.

■ Radon gas

is the second leading cause of lung cancer after smoking.

■ Radon produced in the ground

escapes through porous soils and fissures in the rock of the earth’s crust

■ There are no areas

of the country that are radon free.

■ Testing

is the only way to know the

level of radon in your home

■ Indoor radon concentrations

tend to be higher in winter and can vary significantly from day to day, it is recommended that measurements be taken over a 90 day period during the heating season.

Read more on the web:

www.radiationsafety.ca

MEASURING RADON
Scientists analyze radon monitors at the RSI National Laboratories in Saskatchewan
PHOTO: PETE LAWRENCE



The Radiation Safety Institute of Canada provides a radon testing kit called the E-Perm. It is affordable, reliable and easy to use. Mahoney said: “It is the size of a coffee cup. You leave it in your basement for 90 days, as per Health Canada recommendations, and then send it back to us. We analyze the levels of radon and supply you with all of our findings. There are tests that are conducted over a shorter time frame but they are not as accurate”

Getting rid of radon

A recent survey of 14,000 homes, conducted by Health Canada, revealed that around 7 percent of homes have high radon levels. If you discover that you are living with a high concentration of radon there are highly trained professionals who can help you reduce that level of concentration.

The most successful way of reducing radon levels is the installation of a specialized extraction fan that draws the radon to it before it can enter your home.

The motto of The Radiation Safety Institute of Canada is ‘Good Science in Plain Language’ and this sums them up perfectly. They are raising awareness about the dangers of radon in ways that can be understood by everyone, not just scientists.

JOE ROSENGARTEN
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HOME SAFETY QUIZ

Answers to quiz on page 4:

(1) F – Replace smoke alarms every 10 years and CO alarms every 7-10 years

(2) F – The deadly gas mixes with air, so an alarm can be installed at any height

(3) T – Ionization alarms are best for general living areas and Photoelectric alarms are best for kitchen and bathroom areas

(4) F – An Ionization smoke alarm has a small radioactive component in its sensor, but you get 500x more radiation from eating vegetables than you do from a smoke alarm in a whole year!

(5) F – Homeowners may safely dispose of personal use smoke alarms, up to 10 at one time, in their regular garbage stream. In British Columbia, there is a pilot recycling program underway in conjunction with all smoke alarm manufacturers.

(6) T – Studies prove it! Install one on every storey and outside all sleeping areas.

(7) T – Materials used in home furnishings and other factors have reduced average time to escape from over 10 minutes to less than 3 minutes!



Radiation Safety Institute of Canada

Institut de radioprotection du Canada



Education

- Professional Certificate Courses in Radiation Safety
- Worker and Awareness Education
- Tailor-made Courses



Consulting

- Radiation Protection Program Development
- CNSC License Support
- Radiation Safety Dispute Resolution
- EMF Surveys



Laboratory

- Radon testing
- Personal Alpha Dosimetry
- Instrument Calibration
- Leak Testing