WHAT IS A CARBON MONOXIDE ALARM/DETECTOR?

A **carbon monoxide detector** is a device that detects the presence of the carbon monoxide gas in order to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning. In the late 1990s Underwriters Laboratories (UL) changed their definition of a single station carbon monoxide detector with a sound device in it to a carbon monoxide alarm. This applies to all carbon monoxide safety alarms that meet UL 2034; however for passive indicators and system devices that meet UL 2075, UL refers to these as carbon monoxide detectors. This difference is not well known by the public. Carbon Monoxide is a colorless, tasteless and odorless compound produced by incomplete combustion of carbon containing materials. It is often referred to as the "silent killer" because it is virtually undetectable without using detection technology and most do not realize they are being poisoned. Elevated levels of carbon monoxide can be dangerous to humans depending on the amount present and length of exposure. Smaller concentrations can be harmful over longer periods of time while increasing concentrations require diminishing exposure times to be harmful.

Carbon monoxide detectors are designed to measure CO levels over time and sound an alarm before dangerous levels of CO accumulate in an environment, giving people adequate warning to safely ventilate the area or evacuate. Some system-connected detectors also alert a monitoring service that can dispatch emergency services if necessary.

While Carbon monoxide detectors do not serve as smoke detectors and vice versa, dual smoke/carbon monoxide detectors are also sold. Smoke detectors detect the smoke generated by flaming or smoldering fires, whereas carbon monoxide detectors detect and warn people about dangerous CO buildup caused, for example, by a malfunctioning fuel-burning device. In the home, some common sources of CO include open flames, space heaters, water heaters, blocked chimneys or running a car inside a garage.