

Are You Ready for Winter – Part 2

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is the first in a series of articles that will appear occasionally from the Bollinger County Emergency Responders

Smoke Detectors

Although they are often lumped together as "smoke alarms," there are four different types of smoke and fire alarms used in homes. Some detect heat and actual fire, some detect smoke, and some do both jobs. They can be hard wired throughout your home with battery backup or battery operated only. Purchase based on your needs for your home.

The proper positioning of smoke alarms may be dictated by your local building code, but there are also standard recommendations from the National Fire Protection Association. These recommendations are the basis for many local code requirements:

- Install smoke alarms inside each bedroom, outside each sleeping area, and on every level of the home, including the basement.
- On levels without bedrooms, install alarms in the living room (or den or family room) or near the stairway to the upper level, or in both locations.
- Smoke alarms installed in the basement should be installed on the ceiling at the bottom of the stairs leading to the next level.
- Smoke alarms should be installed at least 10 feet (three meters) from a cooking appliance to minimize false alarms when cooking.
- Mount smoke alarms high on walls or ceilings (remember, smoke rises). Wall-mounted alarms should be installed not more than 12 inches away from the ceiling (to the top of the alarm).
- If you have ceilings that are pitched, install the alarm within three feet of the peak but not within the apex of the peak (four inches down from the peak).
- Don't install smoke alarms near windows, doors, or ducts where drafts might interfere with their operation.
- Never paint smoke alarms. Paint, stickers, or other decorations could keep the alarms from working.
- For the best protection, interconnect all smoke alarms. When one smoke alarm sounds, they all sound. Interconnection can be done using hard-wiring or wireless technology.
- When interconnected smoke alarms are installed, it is important that all of the alarms are from the same manufacturer. If the alarms are not compatible, they may not sound.

Many experts point out that smoke alarms should be placed on the ceiling, or high up on the walls. By positioning the detectors at roughly 12 inches below the ceiling, you can ensure that they will detect smoke at the earliest opportunity.

It is important that every floor of your home have at least one smoke detector. Garages are a very common source of fires, so make sure yours is equipped with a smoke detector. Don't forget basements, sunrooms, and swimming pool or spa areas of the home, and be sure to include furnace rooms, laundry rooms, and other utility spaces in your alarm plan.

Smoke and Carbon Monoxide (CO) Detectors

There are many combination detectors sold that combine smoke detection with carbon monoxide detection, and these pose some complications for positioning in the home. While smoke from fires tends to rise to near ceiling level, carbon monoxide mixes with air and is often found in the greatest concentrations near the floor.

For these reasons, it is best to keep smoke detection and CO detection systems separate and not rely on combination devices.

Carbon monoxide is lighter than air. It also rises with warm air, so the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends placing a carbon monoxide detector on a wall about five feet above the floor or about eye level. Most experts recommend positioning CO detectors outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home, inside an attached garage and on every floor, including the basement.

- At least 10 feet from the garage door leading to your home. You should also place a sensor in the room above the garage.
- At least 15 feet away from gas-burning appliances, like fireplaces or stoves. (These items already put off trace amounts of CO and could cause a false alarm.)

Propane Detectors

The odor is typically likened to that of “rotten eggs.” Propane is naturally odorless, so that distinct smell is added as an odorant in order for a leak to be more easily detected.

There are times when you may not notice a propane leak. You might have a cold or allergies, or another medical condition that affects your sense of smell—you might be away for a period, or you may not be at a second residence that is propane-powered more than a handful of times a year.

Propane occasionally loses its odor due to water or rust inside the tank.

All these possibilities are why we strongly urge to install propane detectors in their home.

Propane gas detectors utilize sensors to measure the amount of propane gas in the immediate vicinity. If the level of gas reaches a dangerous level, the alarm is triggered. This helps prevent serious situations from turning any worse.

Propane gas detectors are inexpensive, and you can purchase them at home improvement stores or through online retailers such as Amazon. Install them near your propane appliances and outside each sleeping area. Propane is heavier than air, so propane detectors should be placed no higher than the pillows on your bed—or lower.

Many people believe that their carbon monoxide detectors will sound an alarm if there is a propane leak in the home. However, most carbon monoxide alarms are ineffective at detecting propane in your house. As a result, it is essential for you to invest in propane detectors!

Fire Extinguishers

Best place to put a fire extinguisher

1. Away from the Source of Heat
2. in the Kitchen
3. in the Bedroom(s)
4. in Garages/Workshops

We all know that kitchens are the most common cause of house fires. Whenever you hear about a house catching fire, the reason is the kitchen most of the time. Precisely, the stoves in the kitchen are responsible for house fires.

Place the fire extinguisher within 30 feet of your stove. However, take care not to place it where flames or smoke can impede access to it. A fire extinguisher in the kitchen remains useless if it cannot be quickly used when necessary.

For small kitchens, fix the extinguisher on a wall nearby. In the kitchen, you can find flammable objects that could spread fire quickly.

You can place the extinguisher near your kitchen door, preferably not behind it. Besides, it would help if you remembered while mounting an extinguisher in your kitchen is that it must not contain water for extinguishing purposes.

Since most of the time, the kitchen fires are greasy/oil-containing in nature, which would increase in size if anyone tries to put them out with water.

Put a fire extinguisher on each floor in your home. It means occupants who need it will not need to climb up or down the stairs to use it. It makes it easier to prevent fire from spreading from floor to floor. Some houses count with extra spaces, a basement or attic, so every area must count with one.

Fires start anywhere, especially where there is electrical wiring. Therefore, remember the basement and attic when placing extinguishers.

Make sure everyone knows the location. Train everybody in your house to use extinguishers for fire prevention correctly, including the children.

When selecting where to mount a fire extinguisher in your home, your goal is to have it ready when you need one. Remember to kill the fire before it spreads.

Please help protect your family and your property. If you need help, **dial 9-1-1** - fire, law enforcement and EMS. Seconds count in an emergency!