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Carbon monoxide alarms as important as smoke alarms, say campaigners

Carbon monoxide alarms should be as common in homes as smoke alarms, said a national safety campaign group at the start of Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week today (21 November).

“Every year during Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week, the importance of alarms to detect and warn of the presence of this deadly gas is emphasised to the public, yet it seems barely a week goes by without hearing a new report of a tragedy,” said David Bott, president of the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL) a not-for-profit group which campaigns for the prevention of needless injuries.

Carbon monoxide is a highly toxic, odourless gas to which people can be exposed at home through faulty gas appliances. Symptoms of poisoning include headaches, chest pain, vomiting, dizziness, drowsiness, distorted vision, breathlessness and stomach pain, and exposure to high levels can cause brain damage and death.

“Audible smoke alarms are standard in homes now and it should be as important to have an alarm to detect deadly carbon monoxide. You can’t smell it, see it or taste it, and often the first sign of knowing carbon monoxide is present is when someone recognises the symptoms of poisoning. Sadly not everyone is aware of the symptoms and even those who are aware can be at risk without an audible alarm, particularly if a leak occurs during the night,” said David.



David's comments were supported by London Fire Brigade Group Manager John Simpson. He said:

"We urge everybody to have a working smoke alarm as it gives vital early warning if fire breaks out in your home. To protect yourself further we would also ask people to invest in a carbon monoxide detector. Carbon monoxide is a silent killer, with least 50 deaths nationally recorded every year as a result of carbon monoxide poisoning. Despite this, the majority of people still do not have a carbon monoxide detector in their home.

"We would also advise people to make sure that their gas heating systems are fitted, serviced and maintained by a Gas Safe Registered engineer."

David added: "Tenants should talk to their landlords to ensure all the appropriate checks on gas appliances have been made and that there is no room for negligence".

As the weather gets colder, heating systems in homes will start to come into heavy use. Homeowners should make sure boilers are maintained by a Gas Safe registered engineer and have an audible carbon monoxide detector alarm as a back-up precaution.

"No-one else will take responsibility for the safety of you and your family. Everyone should take the appropriate measures to prevent needless injuries and deaths".

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Notes to editors:



- For more information please contact the APIL press office on 0115 943 5409 / 0115 943 5416.
- APIL (Association of Personal Injury Lawyers) is a not-for-profit organisation whose members campaign for improvements in the law to help people who are injured or become ill through no fault of their own.
- Visit the association's website at www.apil.org.uk.

The Health and Safety Executive has further information on carbon monoxide. Visit www.hse.gov.uk.