

CO detectors required in all residential buildings

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As of October 15, 2015, all residential buildings require one or more CSA-approved carbon monoxide detectors if the building contains a fireplace, an attached garage intended for the parking or storage of motor vehicles or any kind of fuel burning appliance. Fuel burning appliances include oil or gas burning furnaces, wood or gas burning stoves or clothes dryers, gas powered refrigerators, gasoline or diesel engines or kerosene heaters.

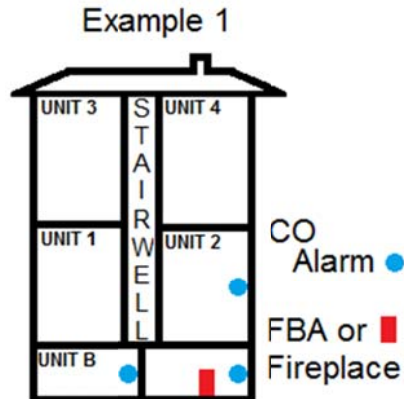
This article explains what detectors are required, where they are to be placed and the rules related to testing and other issues. CO alarms are not necessarily required in every apartment in a building, although they may be.

Which units require alarms?

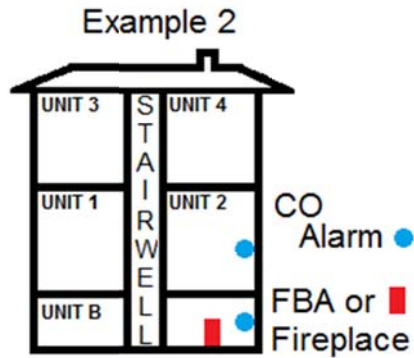
When there is a fuel burning appliance (“FBA”) or fireplace in a dwelling unit itself, a detector must be installed in the dwelling adjacent to each sleeping area.

If a FBA is located in a building service room, a detector must be installed in the service room AND adjacent to each sleeping area in all suites that have a common wall or floor/ceiling assembly with the service room.

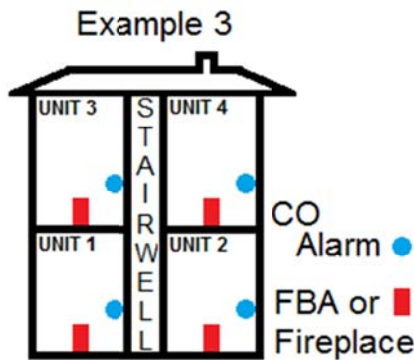
If there is a garage in the building, a detector must be installed adjacent to each sleeping area in all suites that have a common wall or floor/ceiling assembly with the garage.



Example 1 shows the situation of a five unit buildings with one furnace and no fireplaces or other FBAs. The furnace is located in a service room. A carbon monoxide detector is required in the service room, in unit 2 because it shares a common floor/ceiling assembly with the service room, and in unit B, because it shares a common wall with the service room.



In example 2, unit B does not share a common wall with the service room, and therefore a detector is not required in that unit. However, in that case, installing a detector in unit B would still be recommended.



In example 3, all four units have a fireplace or FBA in the suite, and therefore all the suites require at least one detector. (Each suite would require two if there were two different sleeping areas in the suite.)

In example 3 there is no service room. (If there were a FBA in a service room in such a building, then a detector would also be required in the service room.)

Where in the unit or room are alarms required?

If all bedrooms are in one area, then only one detector is required in the dwelling unit. However, if there are bedrooms in two different areas, such as both upstairs and in the basement, then an alarm is required adjacent to each sleeping area. The alarm must make sufficient noise to wake people throughout the sleeping area even though any doors in the sleeping area are closed. The CSA standards would ensure that.

According to the regulations, the alarm is to be “mechanically fixed, attached, plugged in or placed at the manufacturer’s recommended height or, if the manufacturer has not recommended a height, on or near the ceiling.”

Different heights will work because carbon monoxide is very close in weight to ordinary air. Carbon dioxide (CO₂) is much heavier than air, but not carbon monoxide (CO).

Avoid placing the CO alarm in a corner, hidden behind furniture or drapes, or near kitchens or bathrooms. There should be a light circulation of the in-unit air past the

alarm, but not gusts of steamy air. Ideally, the alarm should be between the fuel burning appliance and the sleeping area.

Other rules about CO alarms

CO alarms shall:

- be permanently connected to an electrical circuit with no disconnect switch between the overcurrent device and the carbon monoxide alarm,
- be battery-operated, OR
- be plugged into an electrical receptacle.

The landlord must test CO alarms (and smoke alarms) in rental units:

- annually
- when battery is replaced
- when changes are made to electric circuit and
- when a new tenant moves in.

The required test is to activate the alarm testing feature.

The landlord is required to provide the CO detector (and smoke alarm) maintenance instructions to the tenant. To do that, the landlord would be well advised to provide the tenant a copy of the instructions so that the landlord keeps the original of the instructions to make further copies for future tenants.

On their part, tenants are required to notify the landlord if a CO alarm or smoke alarm is inoperable. Tenants are prohibited from disabling CO alarms or smoke alarms.

CO alarms do not function as smoke detectors, nor vice versa, but some alarms are now designed to function as both alarms.

More information can be accessed at www.oafc.on.ca under the heading "Public Safety." Some municipalities already have local bylaws requiring CO alarms, and the Ontario Building Code requires the installation of carbon monoxide alarms in homes and other residential buildings built after 2001. The new provincial regulation sets out uniform installation and testing requirements across Ontario.