



September 9, 2005

Mike Pfeiffer, PE  
VP, Code Standards and Development  
International Code Council  
5203 Leesburg Pike, Suite 600  
Falls Church, VA 22041

Dear Mr. Pfeiffer:

On behalf of the Home Safety Council (HSC), the only national non-profit solely dedicated to preventing injuries in the home, I urge the International Code Council (ICC) to reconsider its recommendation against the installation of carbon monoxide detectors in new or existing residential homes.

Carbon monoxide is known as the "silent killer" because of its ability to poison without warning. Odorless and tasteless, it puts everyone at risk of becoming seriously ill or even dying. In our 2004 *State of Home Safety in America Report™ (SOHS)*, HSC found that nearly 5 percent of all unintentional home poisoning deaths are caused by carbon monoxide not associated with residential fires.

While most people are familiar with cases of cars running in garages and generating deadly carbon monoxide gases, the reality is that any common household fuel-burning appliance has the potential of creating carbon monoxide build up if it is malfunctioning or is installed improperly. Our 2004 SOHS study found that 67 percent of households use gas, wood, kerosene, coal or fuel as their major heating source, and 51 percent of homes had gas appliances of some sort.

However, less than one-third (29 percent) of all homes overall reported having a carbon monoxide detector. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, these heating sources and appliances, which release carbon monoxide when in use, caused more than 15,000 medical visits and 500 home poisoning deaths during 2001-2003 due to improper equipment servicing or lack of precautionary detectors.

Besides the staggering loss of human lives, the combined medical cost of carbon monoxide accidents, lost productivity and lost wages, amounts to \$8.8 billion a year according to the Carbon Monoxide Health and Safety Association. They estimate that equipping every home with two carbon monoxide alarms would cut that cost by 93 percent.

The Gas Research Institute study, which is often cited by the American Gas Association as showing carbon monoxide alarms to be unreliable, was done in 2002 examining CO alarms that had been manufactured in the 1990s, more than seven years ago. The 2002 study doesn't look at today's carbon monoxide alarms that include the most recent advances in CO technology. As a result, the alarms available in today's marketplace are significantly more reliable and contribute significantly to the decline in carbon monoxide injuries and deaths.

Eight states have laws supporting the installation of carbon monoxide detectors and we believe many lives could potentially be saved by using this safeguard in the home. We urge the Code Technical Committee to review the evidence again and to reconsider its recommendation. By supporting the installation of carbon monoxide detectors in the homes our families and loved ones, we will be better protected from the deaths and injuries associated with this "silent killer."

Sincerely,

Meri-K Appy  
President

**A safe home is in your hands.**