

# HOME SECURITY



**3**  
TIPS  
TO KEEP THE  
MOST  
VULNERABLE  
IN YOUR HOME  
SAFE

## PROTECTING WHAT'S PRECIOUS

How retired firefighter John Gignac is using personal loss to keep you and your family safe

PHOTO: PRIVATE

**Carbon monoxide**  
Ways to detect and avoid the silent killer



**The lock lockdown**  
Determine the right one for your security needs



**No cause for alarm**  
What you can do to prevent false alarms

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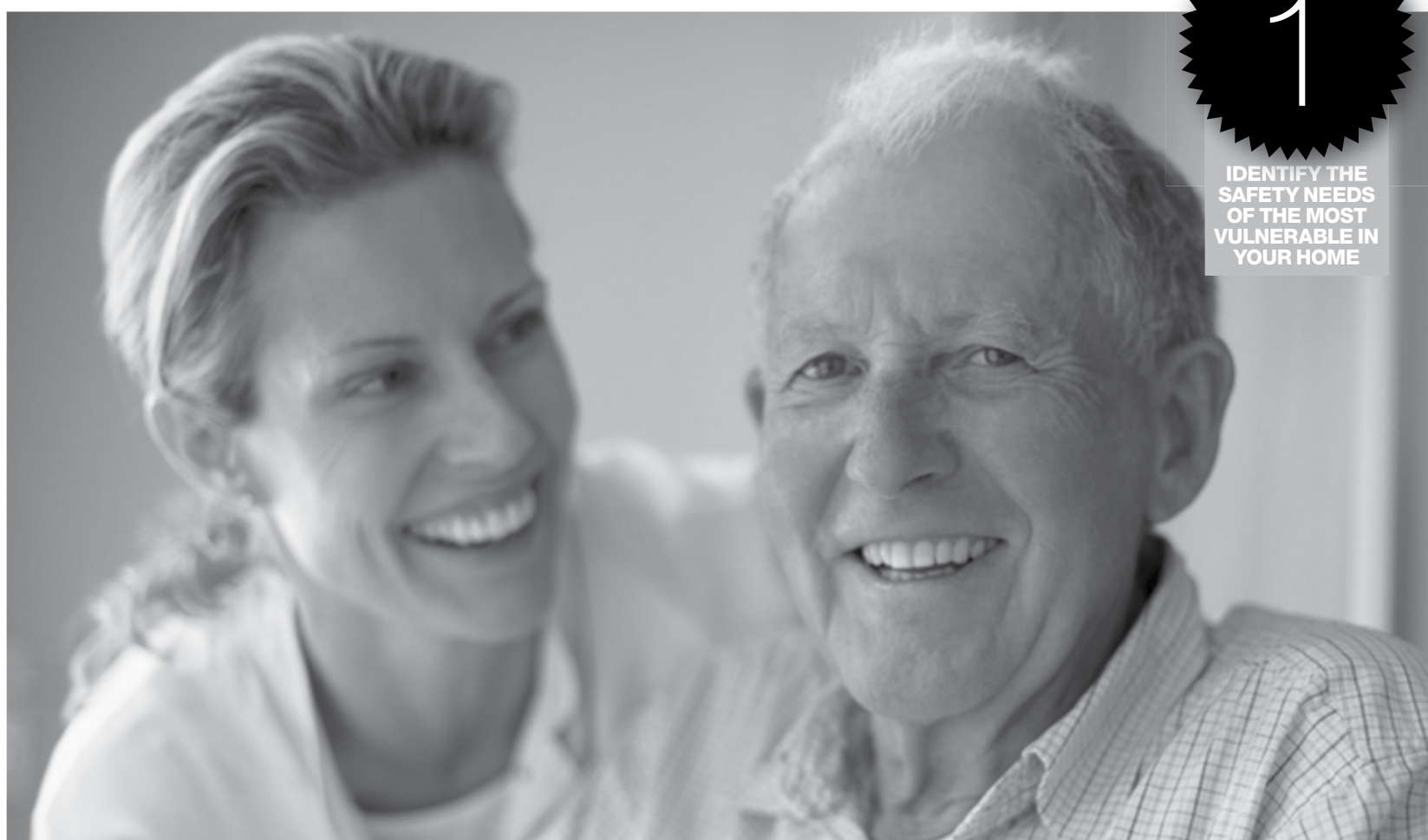
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L'Association canadienne de la sécurité

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## CHALLENGES

TIP

1

IDENTIFY THE  
SAFETY NEEDS  
OF THE MOST  
VULNERABLE IN  
YOUR HOME

Home is where we feel **safest**, but complacency can lull one into a false sense of security. In order to protect those most vulnerable, it's important to recognize the threats—**inside and out**.

## Customized security brings peace of mind

**T**here is no doubt that alarm systems, especially personal emergency response systems, can help save lives. They also bring peace of mind to caretakers, knowing that help will be provided when it's needed most. However, finding the right alarm system can be a daunting process.

With the constant advance of new technologies, alarm systems can be customized to meet almost every need and purpose. Homeowners must consider their income, age, family size, and any life safety devices that may also be required, such as medical alarms or carbon monoxide detectors. Overall, a security system should be customized to meet your requirements and budget. Here are some ways to help you find the right system for your needs.

### Identify your requirements

Every home is different and therefore every alarm system should be too. Ask various alarm companies to provide you with an evaluation of your needs, based on your family members' requirements and habits.

### Do your research

Take time choosing an alarm system. Research companies and always get a minimum of three quotes. Discuss your needs with alarm companies that are members of reputable associations. When comparing companies, be sure to make a true comparison by thoroughly reviewing the types of products to be installed.

### Get references

Ask for references from other customers. Find out how long the alarm company has been in business. Also, ask them to provide you with evidence of their expertise or training. For example, have their technicians completed any college courses or security installation training programs?

### Ask questions

Be an informed consumer. Ask questions until you understand what you are purchasing. Reputable companies should answer positively to most, if not all, of the following questions:

- Is your company a member of an association that enforces a code of ethics?
- Is there proof that your company has all applicable provincial and municipal licences?



JF Champagne  
Executive Director,  
CANASA

"Every home is different and therefore every alarm system should be too."

- Will you provide a written quotation and a contract once the system is purchased?
- Is there a written warranty on equipment and labour?
- Will the system be monitored and, if so, what is the cost and who will be

monitoring it?

- Is there proof that your company carries Errors and Omissions insurance?
- How long have you been in the security alarm business?
- What kind of training do you provide users?
- Do you adhere to a false dispatch reduction program?
- Do you offer any protection for pre-paid monitoring?
- Will I own the system or lease it?
- Can I obtain the master installer's code upon fulfillment of my contract?
- Can anyone service my system?

Security professionals play an important role in your family's personal safety and home protection plan. The Canadian Security Association (CANASA) represents more than 1300 security organizations across Canada, including alarm installers, monitoring companies, and consultants. All of our members adhere to a code of ethics and proper standards, so you can be sure your safety and security needs will be taken care of by a qualified professional.

To learn more about CANASA and find a security professional in your area, visit [canasa.org](http://canasa.org).

## Deter home robbery with extra care

### Education and awareness of preventive techniques can help you recognize a potential crime situation and show you how to reduce or remove the risk.

Becoming involved in your community and getting to know your local police can increase your sense of security. Your participation can also enhance programs and services available to your community.

Most people feel very safe in their homes. However, many Canadians fail to take even fundamental precautions to secure their homes against robbery.

There are a number of precautions you can take that will reduce the opportunities that burglars are looking for including:

- Conduct a security check of your home to determine possible entry points and any weaknesses they may have.
- Keep all entrances and garages well-lit at night.
- Do not leave tell-tale signs that you

are away.

- Install good locks and always use them.
- Install a wide-angle viewer in your front door which allows you to see visitors before you open the door.
- Never open a door to strangers without credentials.
- Change your routine often. Burglars often monitor activities in a neighbourhood.
- Do not keep large amounts of money in your home.
- Mark valuable items for identification. The Operation Identification program has been developed by police to assist people in marking their property.

It is important to take extra care in securing your home when you are going to be away for any extended time. Not only should your home be secure, but it should also appear lived in.

- Lock all windows, doors and the garage before you leave.
- Leave a radio playing to indicate that someone is home.

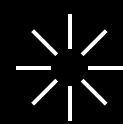


- Leave one or two lights on, preferably operated by timers that turn on according to how dark it is.
- Discontinue mail and newspaper deliveries.
- Arrange to have someone pick up any newspapers, mail or flyers that are left on your step.

- Leave a key with someone you trust.
- Let a trusted neighbour know you're going to be away, for how long and where you can be contacted if necessary.
- Arrange to have someone cut the grass or shovel the snow if you plan to be away for several days.

A secure environment involves working with your neighbours and the local police in identifying community problems and implementing programs and services to create a safer and more secure environment. Contact your local police department in order to obtain information on programs available in your area and to provide suggestions for new initiatives.

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### WE RECOMMEND



**The silent killer**  
Ways to detect and avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.

PAGE 7

"People usually die in fires because of inhalation of smoke and toxic gases."

**The lock lowdown** p. 6  
Determine the right lock for your security needs.

**No cause for alarm** p. 7  
Avoid unnecessary—and potentially costly—false alarms.

## MEDIA PLANET

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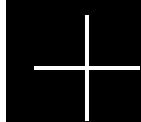
**Managing Director:** Gustav Aspegren  
[gustav.aspegren@mediaplanet.com](mailto:gustav.aspegren@mediaplanet.com)  
**Editorial Manager:** Jackie McDermott  
[jackie.mcdermott@mediaplanet.com](mailto:jackie.mcdermott@mediaplanet.com)  
**Business Developer:** Jennifer Dyer  
[jenn.dyer@mediaplanet.com](mailto:jenn.dyer@mediaplanet.com)

Responsible for this issue:  
**Publisher:** Wayne Woo  
[wayne.woo@mediaplanet.com](mailto:wayne.woo@mediaplanet.com)  
**Designer:** Penelope Graham  
[penelope.graham@mediaplanet.com](mailto:penelope.graham@mediaplanet.com)  
**Contributors:** JF Champagne, Steve Kischak, Ted Kritsonis, Canada Safety Council, The Association of Ontario Locksmiths, The Canadian Security Association, Fire Prevention Canada, The RCMP, Reliance Protectron

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### SECURITY QUICK TIPS

#### Be misleading

**1** A few inexpensive but rich-looking pieces kept in the jewellery box as a decoy may deter criminals from further damaging your home in search of valuables.

#### Be on guard

**2** Always be especially cautious if there is more than one person at your door.

Demand identification at the door. Carefully check the identification and, if in doubt, **DO NOT LET THEM IN**.

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## INSPIRATION

TIP

2

DON'T RULE  
OUT CO  
POISONING IF  
YOU  
EXPERIENCE  
FLU-LIKE  
SYMPTOMS

CO poisoning took **John Gignac's** loved ones, suddenly and without warning. Now, the retired firefighter is pushing to make CO detectors mandatory—and to spread **awareness.**

# Speaking up about a deadly silence

## CHANGE

**As the leading cause of poisonous deaths in North America, carbon monoxide is considered "The Silent Killer" because of how deadly it can be without anyone even noticing.**

For retired firefighter John Gignac, losing his niece, her husband and their two kids to carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning was a harrowing ordeal he doesn't wish on anyone. What made it all the more heartbreaking was that their lives could've been saved had there been a CO detector in the house to prevent it.

"They had turned the fireplace up one night, but because the vents were blocked 85 to 90 percent, it pushed all the carbon monoxide back into the house and poisoned the family," Gignac says, recounting the terrible tragedy. "The investigation found that they had been exposed to carbon monoxide over a period of time—and CO is cumulative—so when they succumbed to it that night, they already had

a buildup of CO in their bodies at the time."

His niece, Laurie, managed to fight for her life for eight days after the incident until she succumbed, though Gignac says doctors can't explain how she was able to survive that long with so much CO in her body. A week prior to the incident, she had taken her kids to see the family doctor because of flu-like symptoms—which are now attributed to the level of CO in the home.

#### Preemptive health signs can mislead

Flu-like symptoms in the home have been proven to be a consequence of exposure to CO, but it's hard to know for sure unless a CO detector is installed. Unlike smoke, which is caused by combustion and can be seen and smelled, carbon monoxide is odourless, tasteless and invisible, Gignac says.

"The only proven way to protect yourself and your family from carbon monoxide is to get a detector," Gignac says. "Children and seniors have diminished lung capacities because their lungs aren't capable of

## PROFILE

#### John Gignac

##### ■ Position:

Retired firefighter with 34 years of experience.

##### ■ In memory:

Laurie Hawkins (nee Gignac) was a community services officer for the Oxford County Ontario Provincial Police

■ Richard Hawkins was known as a die-hard hockey dad. Daughter Cassandra was an outgoing teen. Son Jordan, delivered newspapers with the same spirit he endured his autism

handling a large volume of oxygen, so it would take less gas to affect them. We need to get these detectors in retirement homes and schools as well."

Given the silence of CO, a lot of poisoning incidents happen at night when people are sleeping and most susceptible to the gas. "People can go to sleep and never wake up because of this, so we're really looking to raise awareness of the issue so we can save lives," he says.

#### Making some noise

Gignac adds that he doesn't just educate people on how CO is created, how it affects them and how they can protect themselves; he also educates them on the proper use of CO detectors. Through his charitable Hawkins-Gignac Foundation for CO Education, plus its website, EndtheSilence.ca, Gignac says he has devoted his time to helping raise awareness for the issue.

"Less than 60 percent of Ontario households have CO detectors," Gignac says. "You want to make your house energy-efficient by sealing it off to keep the cold air from coming in, but then your home

isn't breathing, so the gas could build up quicker and, without a detector, you will never know."

#### Make it mandatory

On top of talking to kids in schools, seniors in retirement homes and anyone in between, Gignac has also joined a coalition in taking his message to Queen's Park. On the second anniversary of his family's tragic passing, he spoke to Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty and MPPs in the House of Commons, and pleaded with them to pass Bill 69, which would make CO detectors mandatory in Ontario residences.

"The only way to get all Ontarians to put CO detectors in the home is to legislate it," Gignac says. "When smoke alarms were first introduced, many weren't putting them in their homes until the law told them to. All we're trying to do is get people in Ontario to put at least one CO detector in their homes to protect themselves from this silent killer."

TED KRITSONIS

editorial@mediaplanet.com



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# PROFESSIONAL INSIGHT



1. Remembering the family lost to CO poisoning.  
 2. Gignac in a recording booth voicing a Public Service Announcement to educate Canadians on the dangers of carbon monoxide.  
 3. Scanning an aging furnace for CO leaks with a combustion analyzer.  
 PHOTOS: PRIVATE

  
**DON'T MISS!**



## Tips for parents: when your child is home alone

### Telephone

- List important numbers beside each telephone and/or program them in.
- Equip your phone with an answering device or service so it can take messages.
- Buy a phone with caller I.D. Tell your child to answer the phone only for specific callers. Let the phone take a message for all others.
- Install a wireless home monitoring system that will alert you to when your child returns home. Receive these alerts to your cell phone, office phone, BlackBerry or email. Adding a video camera can provide an extra layer of security so you can be aware even when you are not there.

### Security

- Provide secure locks for all doors and windows.
- Store matches, lighters, medications, household cleaners and other toxic substances in a safe place. Make sure they are clearly labeled and in their original containers.
- Lock up alcoholic beverages, and check to make sure they do not mysteriously disappear.
- Store firearms and ammunition separately and under lock and key.
- Use light timers so your child doesn't come home to a dark house.

### Fire safety

- You must have a smoke alarm on each level of the house (or for homes on one level, near the kitchen and all bedrooms). Test them to make sure they all work.
- Replace any broken electrical cords and use no more than two plugs per outlet.
- Keep your hot water heater below 54 C to prevent scalding.

### First aid

- Assemble a basic kit with your child, explaining what each item is and how to use it. Include:
  - A box of different-sized bandages for small cuts;
  - Sterile gauze pad for larger cuts, with adhesive tape to hold it and small scissors to cut the tape;
  - Tweezers to remove slivers;
  - Peroxide to clean cuts and cotton balls to apply it;
  - A digital thermometer to check for fever;
  - Keep a cold pack in the freezer.

### Power outages

- Keep a flashlight or two (and extra batteries) handy.
- Provide a few items that can run on batteries, e.g. radio, clock, electronic games.

Courtesy of Canada Safety Council  
 editorial@mediaplanet.com

**Question:** With the barrage of lock types and options available to consumers, how can you determine what best suits your security needs?

**Answer:** It's important to understand what type of lock is suitable for each structure and potential weather conditions.

# Get the lowdown on the right lock for your home

Depending on how you look at it, the locks on your doors can either be the first line or the last line of defense for your home.

Between alarm and surveillance systems, as well as other setups that are possible with today's technology, locking your doors is the most natural security method people learn from a young age. But time has changed the way locks are designed and manufactured, providing more choice to homeowners who want a solid mix of style and security.

Steve Kischak is the president of The Association of Ontario Locksmiths, and he considers a home to be an investment that must be protected the best ways possible. When it comes to locks, a quality installation by a professional might be the best way to ensure that everything is how it should be.

"A locksmith can customize the security of your home, and compatible locks can be keyed alike or even master keyed," Kischak says. "Planning ahead will give you the opportunity to get the exact products and fit you're looking for, but you should note that special order locks can take three or four weeks to arrive."

Locks come in a number of different types and styles, so choices are fairly

abundant. Kischak suggests some popular residential locks can include deadbolts, grip sets, knobs and levers, as well as mortise locks, rim locks and push button or electronic locks.

### It's in the mechanics

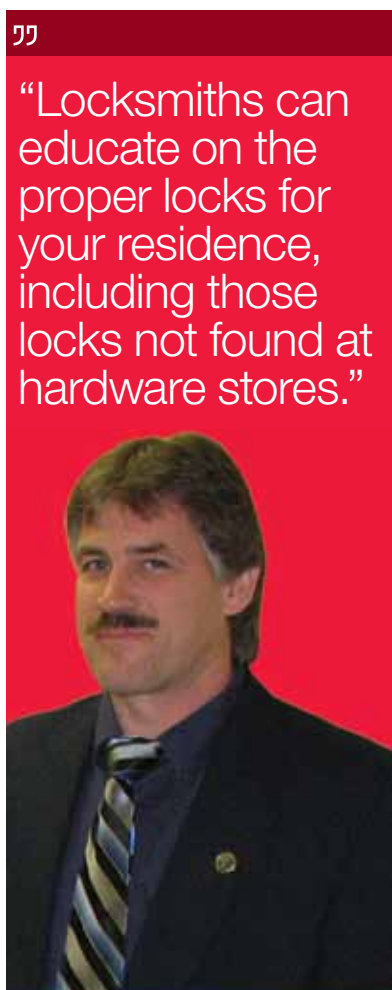
The differences between all these is based on how they work. Kischak says deadbolts usually provide the greatest security because they aren't spring-loaded like key-in-knob locks are. This means they can only be opened by turning the bolt in the lock, which also makes them better at withstanding break-in attempts.

But deadbolts aren't always the easiest to manage for the elderly, which is why he suggests levers are more user-friendly for seniors. Electronic locks or keycard locks are usually found in commercial settings like office buildings and hotels, rather than residences.

"There really are a myriad of styles and finishes available, so choosing those that are more mainstream will make parts easier to come by as time goes on," he says.

### Nuts and bolts

"There are also some differences between indoor and outdoor locks" he adds. "Deadbolts and grip sets are generally considered outdoor locks. While dead bolts provide the best security features, grip sets offer aesthetic appeal to home owners which is why it makes sense to



Steve Kischak  
 President,  
 The Association of Ontario Locksmiths

opt for quality hardware that will stand the test of time."

"Locksmiths can educate on the proper locks for your residence including those locks not

found at hardware stores," Kischak says. "Certain locks can be tricky to install, like mortise or pushbutton locks, and these require an experienced technician."

### Lock it down

For added safety, buying and installing a safe in your home might make a big difference in protecting valuables from home invasion or even a fire. Since location and placement are critical, a professional can help determine the most secure location, while also considering things like weight, dimensions and protrusions like hinges and the dial, Kischak says.

"What you store in a safe dictates the type you need," he says. "Fire ratings rarely apply to burglary safes, while fire safes offer a humid environment that can be detrimental to storing some materials, so they should be aired out regularly. If you need a burglary safe opt for the best quality and have it professionally installed."

"Security and convenience are usually mutually exclusive, but you can determine your security and access needs by seeking professional advice on how to meet them," he says.

TED KRITSONIS  
 editorial@mediaplanet.com

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NEWS

TIP  
**3**  
MONITORED ALARM SYSTEMS ARE THE MOST EFFECTIVE PREVENTATIVE MEASURE



**Fire safety tips for seniors**

**The two leading causes of fire deaths and injuries among older adults are smoking materials and the misuse of portable space heaters.**

**Tips to remember**

- Smokers should have a designated area away from upholstered materials, such as the kitchen table.
- Never smoke in bed while reading—it is too easy to fall asleep and print materials are highly flammable.
- Sleep with the bedroom door closed in order to provide more time to escape if a fire occurs.
- Keep space heaters well-ventilated and at least three feet away from flammable materials.
- Unplug space heaters when not in use.
- Extension cords are for temporary use only and should not be used with a space heater or electric blanket.
- Never run electrical cords under a carpet or rug.

**Smoke alarms can save your life!**

Smoke alarms are inexpensive and easy to install. For assistance with the location and installation of smoke alarms, call your local fire department and visit our “Smoke Alarms” fact sheet.

- Ensure there is a working smoke alarm on every floor of the home and outside every sleeping area.
- Have a friend or relative test your smoke alarm while you are asleep to ensure you can hear it.
- Once a month, test the battery by pushing the test button and drift smoke from a snuffed-out candle into the alarm.
- Once a year, change the battery.
- To clean the smoke alarm, open the cover and gently vacuum the unit with a soft brush attachment.
- Replace smoke alarms if they are more than 10 years old.

**Fire escape planning saves lives:**

- Develop and practice a fire escape plan. Be sure to include all hallways and stairs.
- Know two ways out of every room and how to escape from all levels of your home.
- Ensure all doors and windows can be unlocked or opened.

**In case of fire—GET OUT AND STAY OUT—never go back into a burning building.**

- Crawl low near the floor to the nearest exit maintaining contact with the wall.
- Test the door by feeling it with the back of your hand. If it is hot, do not open. Use an alternative route.
- If the door and knob are cool, stay low with your shoulder against the door while opening slowly. Be ready to close the door if smoke and heat rush in.
- If trapped, put as many closed doors as possible between you and the fire, and seal all cracks in doors and windows with towels or bedding.
- If your clothing catches fire, stop where you are, drop gently to the ground and cover your face with your hands while rolling back-and-forth to put out the flames.
- Cool minor burns with cold water.

Courtesy of Fire Prevention Canada  
editorial@mediaplanet.com

# Protect yourself from silent killers

**Question:** How can you ensure you and your loved ones don't fall victim to the invisible toxic effects of CO2?

**Answer:** New smoke detector technology that also screen for CO2 are much more effective at recognizing cause for alarm.

**Losing lives or precious belongings from a fire or toxic inhalation is not only harrowingly tragic— it hurts even more when simple safety precautions and a little knowledge could have alleviated it from ever happening.**

Fire Prevention Canada, a non-profit organization focused on fire prevention and education, states that as many as eight people are killed in Canada each week from fire-related incidents. Residential fires account for 73 percent of those deaths.

It's with these stats in mind that home security experts are looking to help Canadians not only protect themselves, but also their homes and memories. Smoke detectors are fairly common in households now, but newer monitored smoke and fire detectors are considered much more effective at alerting someone when something is wrong.

**Reducing false alarms is an important step in helping to ensure that emergency response teams are available to respond to true emergencies when you or your family need help the most.**

If you, or those you care for, use a security system in the home, here are a few tips on how to reduce false alarms and make the best use of the system.

**Ask for Enhanced Call Verification and provide multiple contacts:** “Enhanced Call Verifica-



“People usually die in fires because of inhalation of smoke and toxic gases.”

**Patrice De Luca**  
Vice President,  
Reliance Protection Security Services

**Time is of the essence**

“People usually die in fires because of inhalation of smoke and toxic gases,” says Patrice De Luca, vice president of marketing and business development at Reliance Protection Security Services. “If we can get there early enough, there's a better chance of saving lives, but even if no one is home, we can save the home and valuables

**TIPS**

- **If you have** sudden flu-like symptoms, like dizziness and nausea, they might be signs that you're being intoxicated with carbon monoxide.
- **If a fire** breaks out in your home, it's always better to call 911 from somewhere else, as the fire could spread quickly.
- **You need to** maintain anything that uses combustion in your home, and that includes cleaning the

inside, especially computers and photos.”

**Irreplaceable memories**

De Luca adds that the “major traumatic shock” people experience after losing a home to a fire is the loss of the tangible memories that went with it. These can include photos, gifts, travel mementos, family heirlooms, and

chimney, maintaining kitchen and laundry appliances, and the furnace.

- **Carbon monoxide** inhalation fatalities have happened because a remote starter accidentally started a car in the garage. Be careful to keep the remote in a safe location.
- **Be careful** of service providers who use high-pressure techniques to sell their systems and force you to make a decision on the spot.

anything uniquely important to the person or people living there.

Home security monitoring works much like auto services that activate when cars are stranded or stolen, except they encompass everything from fire to burglary. He suggests this proves more useful in cases of inhalation and intoxication. Though smoke can be easy to smell, carbon monoxide is actually invisible and odourless on its own, which is especially dangerous to children and the elderly. Hence, why it's considered “the silent killer”.

“As you breathe in carbon monoxide, you will get progressively intoxicated because it occupies the red cells, which are needed to absorb oxygen in the blood, so it ends up in the bloodstream and puts you in a state of confusion or causes you to lose consciousness,” De Luca explains.

This is why families with children and the elderly tend to be the most interested in monitoring services where reacting quickly and decisively is so crucial.

“We can't always smell a fire in our sleep, and we can't do anything when we're not home, so an extra level of protection is worth it if it saves even one life,” he says.

**TED KRITSONIS**  
editorial@mediaplanet.com

## Save cause for alarm for true emergencies

prepared to respond to alarm-related calls for those you provide care for. With the right information, monitoring stations can be proactive in determining if emergency response services should be dispatched.

**Schedule annual inspections:** Request annual maintenance inspections to ensure proper performance of the alarm system. Also, don't forget to have the battery replaced every three to five years.

**Properly train users:** Ensure all end users, including senior users and

caretakers, are trained in the proper use of the alarm system and know the passcode and monitoring station's number in case the alarm is accidentally set off.

**Monitor changes in the home:** Contact your alarm company to ensure they won't affect the alarm system. New pets that enter an armed room or plants or curtains placed too close to drafty areas can trigger an alarm.

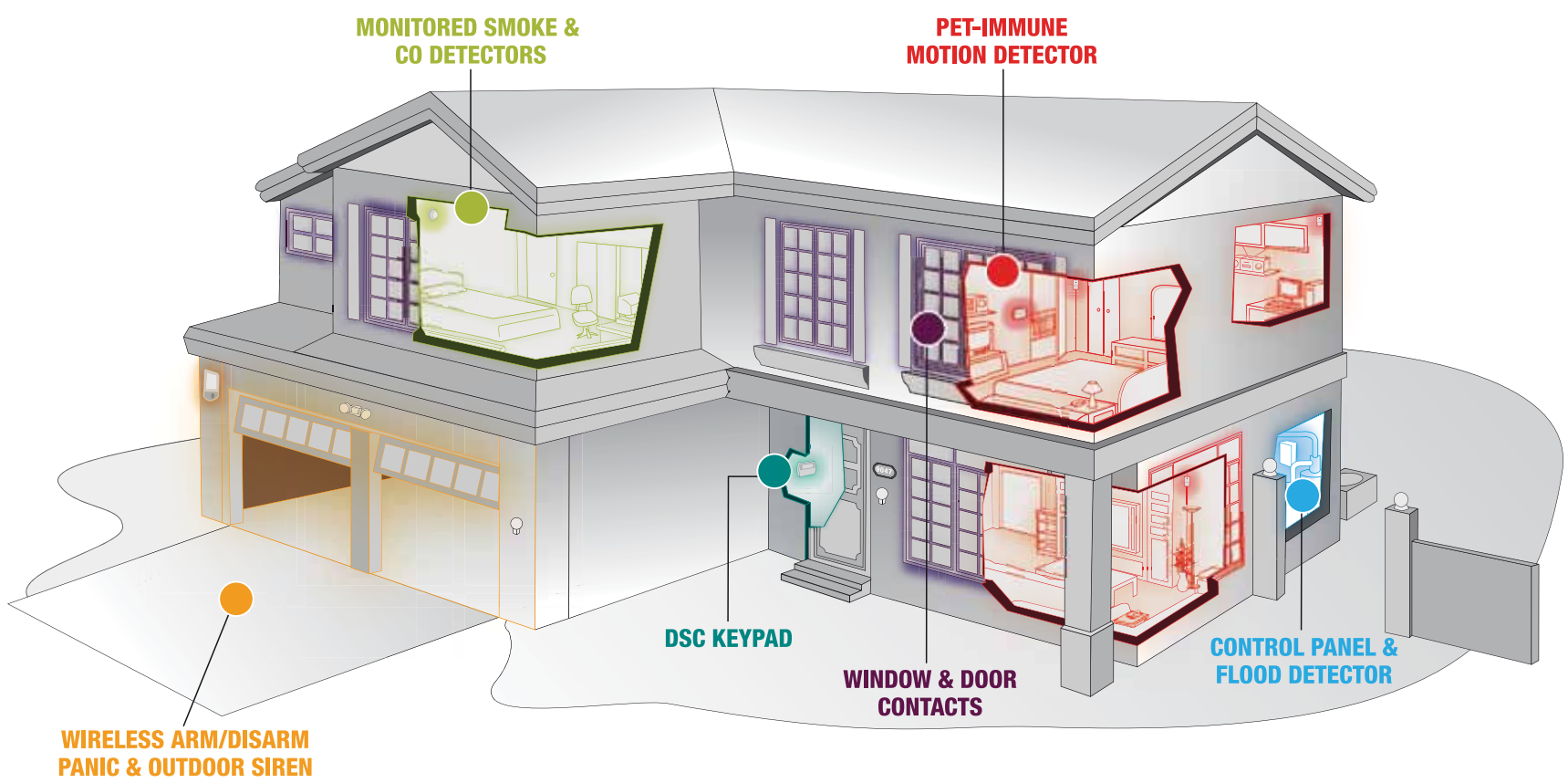
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