

BEER!

By AZ2 Bridgette Hamilton,
VAW-117

During the years I've lived in military housing, I've never worried about home safety until one Saturday afternoon when officials from the housing office introduced me to carbon-monoxide detectors. They were pushing a shopping cart through the neighborhood, ringing doorbells, and leaving two, plain, brown, cardboard boxes at every door.

When they rang my doorbell, I took the two boxes and had to sign for them. "If you don't turn these in when you vacate, you'll owe \$75 for each one," they warned. I then checked the boxes for labels, markings or instructions, but there were none, so I asked what was in them. "Carbon-monoxide detectors," they replied.

After looking around my housing unit, I decided to put one detector in a hallway and the other in the living room. A short while later, both detectors started beeping about every two minutes. I asked my neighbors about their detectors and learned they had the same annoying problem. Later, I would learn the beeps indicated the batteries were low.

Meanwhile, though, I put the detectors back in their boxes and stowed them in a closet for turn-in when I vacated the premises. "Since this housing and my appliances are new, why should I have to worry about carbon-monoxide poisoning?" I rationalized.

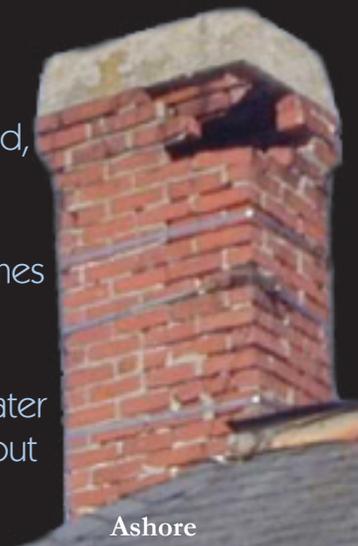
About four months later, I transferred and moved into another military-housing unit. The officials again issued me a carbon-monoxide

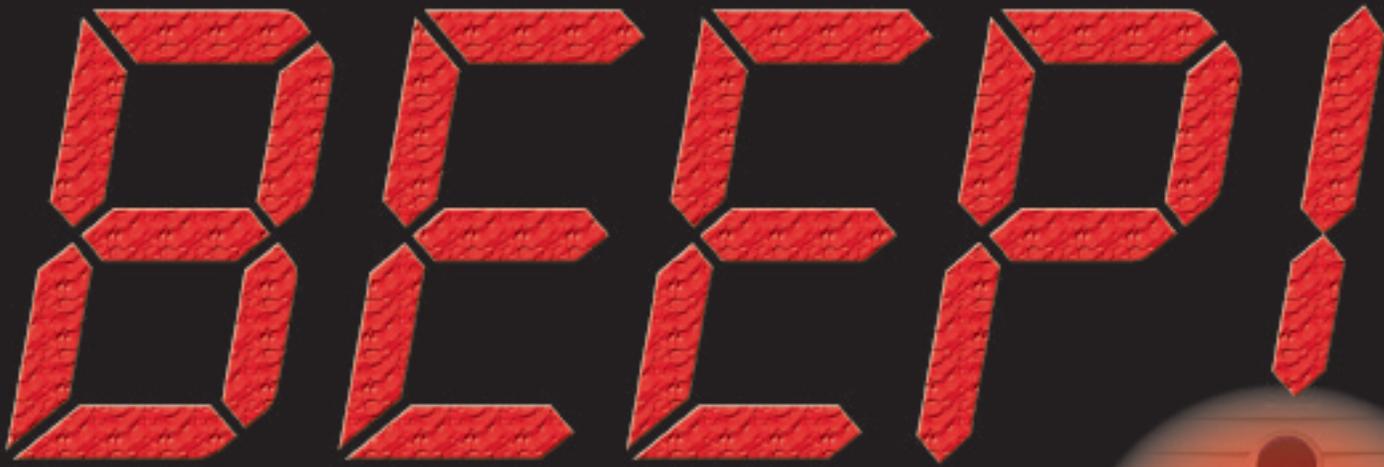
detector without instructions but with the same stern warning about my financial responsibility for it. "This thing is going straight into a closet," was my thought as the officials left, and that's what happened.

A few days later, an inspector from the fire department came to check my housing unit. One of his first questions was, "Where is your carbon-monoxide detector?" He seemed stunned by my response and asked me to get the detector from the closet. He then gave me a detailed brief on its precautions, use and maintenance.

I now have the detector mounted in a hallway, away from direct heat, and I regularly change the batteries. **A**

The missing bricks from this chimney collapsed inside and, fortunately, went all the way to the bottom. If the bricks had stuck inside, exhaust fumes (possibly containing deadly levels of carbon monoxide) from the heating-and-hot-water system could have backed out into the basement.





CARBON-MONOXIDE DETECTORS CAN SAVE LIVES



About 200 people die each year from carbon-monoxide poisoning related to home, fuel-burning, heating equipment.

Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless gas that is produced when a fuel doesn't burn completely. Victims suffer flu-like symptoms, including dizziness, fatigue, headaches, nausea, and irregular breathing. Carbon monoxide can leak from faulty furnaces or fuel-fired heaters, or it can be trapped inside by a blocked chimney or flue. Burning charcoal inside a house or running an automobile's engine in an attached garage also will produce carbon monoxide in the home.

The first line of defense against carbon monoxide is to make sure all fuel-burning appliances are working. Consumers should have their home-heating system, including chimneys and flues, inspected each year to make sure it works and doesn't leak. Inspectors should check all heating appliances and their electrical and mechanical components, thermostat controls, and automatic safety devices.

A working carbon-monoxide detector can provide an early warning to consumers before the deadly gas builds up to a dangerous level. Exposure to a low concentration over several hours can be as dangerous as exposure to high levels for a few minutes. New detectors will detect both conditions.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) recommends that consumers purchase and install carbon-monoxide detectors with labels showing they meet requirements of the new voluntary standard (UL 2034) of Underwriters Laboratories, Inc. This standard requires detectors to sound an alarm when exposure to carbon monoxide reaches hazardous levels over a period of time. Detectors that meet the requirements of UL 2034 provide a greater safety margin than previously manufactured models.

Most of the detectors sold today cost less than \$100. Each home should have at least one in the area outside individual bedrooms. The CPSC believes that carbon-monoxide detectors are as important as smoke detectors to home safety. 

With this faulty flue-pipe installation, exhaust fumes from the gas-fired water heater could back out at the draft-diverter hood. These fumes could contain deadly levels of carbon monoxide.

