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The Center for Campus Fire Safety Urges Installation of Carbon Monoxide Alarms

AMHERST, MA - August 20, 2007 – The 23 students sickened this past weekend at Virginia Tech by carbon monoxide (CO) underscores the vulnerability millions of young people face as they head to campuses across the country. While requirements for smoke alarms are virtually universal in on- and off-campus housing throughout the U.S., laws requiring CO alarms are spotty and inadequate, according to the Center for Campus Fire Safety.

“Every year, we see tragedies like this incident, and our thoughts and prayers are with the families of all of these victims,” said Paul Martin, vice president of the Center. “Many of these tragedies may have been prevented if a CO alarm had been in place. Unfortunately, most dormitories and off-campus residences do not have them.”

Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless and tasteless gas that can be fatal when inhaled. It is produced by any fuel-burning appliance, including inadequately ventilated fireplaces, barbeque grills, and water heaters. The only safe way to detect the presence of CO is with a working carbon monoxide alarm. Similar to smoke alarms, CO alarms can easily be installed into any residence. Some models offer battery back-up protection for continuous operation during a power outage.

“As students head back to school, they or their parents need to add these life-saving devices to the packing list,” said Martin. “For about the cost of a throw pillow or decorative rug, a parent or student can make a purchase that could save their life and the lives of others.”

About three-fourths of college students ages 18-24 live off campus, in either Greek housing or a rental home or apartment. More and more, states throughout the country are passing legislation requiring CO alarms in residential dwellings. In recent years, at least 13 states, including Florida, Maryland, Illinois, Massachusetts, New York, Connecticut, Vermont, and Minnesota have passed laws requiring CO alarms in different circumstances. Martin said, “Preventing these senseless tragedies is possible, and we encourage state legislatures throughout the country to take the necessary steps to require CO alarms in addition to smoke alarms in residential dwellings, including dormitories and off-campus housing.”

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For more information about carbon monoxide while at school, visit www.knowaboutco.com.

The Center for Campus Fire Safety is a non-profit organization formed to provide a central focal point for campus fire safety issues. Through education and advocacy, the Center works to raise awareness about campus fire safety and provide tools and information to the public, college administrators and staff as well as government officials. Additional information can be found on its website: www.campusfire.org

America's Advocate for Fire Safe Campuses