



**TOWN OF CANTON
VOLUNTEER**
Fire & EMS Department
Valuing Life...at a Moment's Notice



PRESS RELEASE

Contact: Sylvia Cancela, PR Officer

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693-3877; firefightersylvia@comcast.net

***Canton Volunteer Firefighters go Door to Door Promoting
Be Safe....Replace***

Canton, CT March 8, 2009 Daylight Saving Time; 10:00 a.m.... As Engine 3 and Ladder 2 rounded the bend into Whispering Woods condominiums curious residents, some still in their bathrobes, peeked out wondering what was going on.

No emergency today. Instead, Canton's volunteer firefighters were distributing *free* carbon monoxide alarms and new batteries as part of their *Be Safe....Replace* campaign.

The primary goals of *Be Safe Replace* are to: provide residents with the critical tools required to safeguard their families and property, and to build awareness and educate Canton residents as to *their* responsibilities for the upkeep of fire and CO alarms.

Twice a year on Daylight Saving Time, the Town of Canton Volunteer Fire & EMS Department, (Department), works with a sponsor to purchase fire and/or carbon monoxide alarms and batteries which they then provide *free of charge* to town residents.

“Since May/2006, we’ve taken the *Be Safe...Replace* campaign from older homes in Collinsville to newer developments in North Canton,” noted Chief Richard Hutchings. “For the Spring 2009 campaign, we targeted Canton’s condos. The Canton Lions Club generously donated 30 CO alarms, 100 batteries and Lions President Bob Bessel even came along for the ride.”

Bessel joined 20 Canton volunteer firefighters and fire cadets as they went door to door distributing CO alarms and batteries and speaking to residents at Dyer Farms, Whispering Woods, Canton Hollow, Spoonwood and Canton Village.

As the morning went on, Collinsville Fire Engineer Tom Gotaski observed that, “while the majority of people we visited were aware of the importance of having a smoke alarm in the home, maintenance of those alarms - keeping fresh batteries in the units and replacing older models - was another matter.”

“We found fire alarms that were over 10 years old and even one whose batteries were last changed in 1994. But, that’s easy to fix,” Gotaski continued.

“What was more concerning, was the lack of awareness about the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning and how CO alarms can save lives.”

The Canton Lions Club has a personal stake in supporting the efforts of the Department to increase this awareness. Just about one year ago, fellow Lion Jerry Contu and his wife Jeannine died due to CO poisoning. There were no CO alarms in the home to warn them that the car in their garage had been left running.

On the other hand, at a recent emergency call on East Hill Road, CO alarms were the first warning that an ATV, left running in the garage, was pumping CO throughout the house. “Barely a week goes by,” noted Hutchings, “where we don’t get a call about possible CO in the home due to an alarm activation. It’s a lot more common than people realize.”

As morning turned into afternoon, volunteer firefighters had collected the names of elderly residents who didn’t have CO alarms in their homes, but wanted them. Bessel and the Lions Club will be following up with additional donations for these individuals. “If we can help prevent one person from going through the pain of losing a friend, neighbor or family member,” said Bessel, “then it’s worth our support of those efforts.”

Hutchings applauded the work of the Lions, but warned that the Department’s *Be Safe ...Replace* campaign can only reach so many people. Hutchings instead recommends that everyone, “check on elderly neighbors who may not be able to climb a ladder to reach their fire/CO alarm to install a new unit or replace batteries. With this simple gesture, you could save a life.”

Anyone interested in becoming a member of the Town of Canton Volunteer Fire & EMS Department can visit www.cantonfireandems.org, or drop by Collinsville, North Canton or Canton firehouses Monday evenings during the Department’s weekly practice drill at 7:30 p.m.

SIDE BAR: Frequently Asked Questions During Be Safe...Replace/2009

How do I know if there is CO in my home?

You don’t. Unlike fire, CO has no color or odor. It can’t be detected by any of your senses. CO comes from the incomplete burning of coal, wood, oil, charcoal, kerosene, propane or natural gas. It can come from a malfunctioning furnace, stove, water heater, fireplace, portable generator, lawn mower, etc. Even running your car with the garage door open creates CO.

How will I know if I’m being poisoned by CO?

As CO begins to displace the oxygen in your blood, you may feel dizzy, tired, nauseous, short of breath and/or have a headache. As the poisoning continues to move through your system, your ability to help yourself diminishes as you become mentally confused, lose muscle coordination and ultimately lose consciousness. If you are not rescued, you will likely not survive.

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