The Electronic Nose

Carbon monoxide is a tasteless, odorless, colorless gas that can cause instant death in high enough concentrations. It binds to the hemoglobin in the blood, making it unable to perform its function: carrying oxygen to your body.

Until recently, the best affordable CO detector was a plastic card with a red spot in its center. If the red spot got dark, carbon monoxide was in the room. That darkened red spot could save your life - if you happened to notice it before you lost consciousness.

Now there's a better way. The Electronic Carbon Monoxide Detector is the size of a paperback book and hangs from a 110-volt outlet. It

CO detector: Buy or die.

sounds a shrieking 85-decibel alarm if it detects CO in dangerous concentrations.

This unit isn't perfect: it won't detect carbon monoxide levels lower than 100 parts per million - still high enough to cause headaches with persistent exposure but not enough to cause death. On the other hand, any exposure to this poisonous gas is too much.

It's only a matter of time before CO detectors become a mandatory part of building and housing laws like smoke detectors. But why wait? Get one of these today, to prevent your next sound sleep from being your last.

- Simson L Garfinkel

Electronic Carbon Monoxide Detector: US$49.95. American Sensors Electronics Inc.: (800) 387 4219, +! (905)477 3320.