



# Make the right choice

By Tracey Rushton-Thorpe

Landlords and homeowners need to take action now to meet new rules for concealed flues serving gas boilers, including fitting a carbon monoxide alarm if one is not present, as an interim measure. That's great news for you if you are stocking the right products. Here we give you a quick guide to what is available.

## New legislation

The use of fan-flued gas appliances since the mid-1990s has enabled freedom in positioning boilers away from external walls. However, many flues hidden in wall and ceiling voids could not be fully inspected as part of mandatory inspections by gas engineers. Defects could result in carbon monoxide entering homes, resulting in death or injury from CO poisoning.

Now, inspection hatches must be installed by the end of 2012 to enable full inspection, and for the first time, Building Regulations Approved Document J specifies that CO alarms are now a mandatory requirement – it states: "where a new or replacement fixed solid fuel appliance is installed in a dwelling, a CO alarm should be provided in the room where the appliance is located."

There is a huge range of carbon monoxide alarms available which are suitable for both the new build and retrofit market, the key is to find a brand name you can trust.

## Simple installation

Kidde Fynmetics offer a range of CO alarms for new buildings and major refurbishment or upgrade and we found

the latest mains powered alarms (available as a digital or non-digital model) to be ideal for the social housing sector, with sealed-in, rechargeable lithium cells for back-up, preventing tenant access.

They can be interlinked and also used as part of Kidde Fynmetics's unique Smart Interconnect system for whole-house fire and CO protection, in conjunction with the company's hard-wired smoke and heat alarms.

One of the main benefits of the hard-wired alarm is that it is easy to fit. Now this might seem a little obvious, but believe me, there are some companies out there that like to make your life difficult! This is an ideal model to have on your counter because it needs to be fitted by a qualified electrician and therefore by putting it in full view, you can sell them to

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your customer's as an 'add on' to their usual order, and they, in turn can sell the benefits to their customers. Because it is so simple to install, it's a job which they can tag on to just about any installation.

### Packed with features

As you would expect from Kidde Fynmetics this model is packed full of features which include electrochemical sensor sampling of air every 15 seconds which makes it much safer than other models which only sample every 80 seconds.

I have already mentioned that it is easy to fit but that doesn't really do justice to quite how easy it is as it simply connects with a snap-on harness and the unit locks in place by default. In addition its neat circular design can be ceiling or wall mounted so it's easy to find a suitable place for it to live without it being too obtrusive.

There are many other benefits to this alarm which include a product life of seven years from initial power-up

and while I don't expect these to be sitting on the shelves for long, this means that wouldn't be an issue. It also comes with a six year full guarantee.

Although this was the model that we reviewed, there is also a full range of battery powered units for installation where hard-wiring is not viable and plug-in mains CO alarms for transferable protection. Put simply the range which Kidde Fynmetics offers is extensive and it comes from a name you can trust.

### Protected by angels

The next set of products which we tried out was from Sprue Safety Products, manufacturers of BRK & FireAngel branded alarms.

The FireAngel range of carbon monoxide alarms provides a compact, easy to install solution which once again lives up to the expectations of the brand. I have long been a fan of FireAngel, mainly because their products are easy to use and they look good into

the bargain, and while looking good may not be top of everyone's list, there are some very ugly alarms out there which I think you would have a hard job selling!

The CO-9X battery powered CO alarm has been designed with an internal power pack that will power the alarm for seven years in normal operating conditions - so there's no need to ever replace the batteries. It also comes with an automatic self diagnostic check and the triple LED display shows power, fault and alarm, so it's easy to check if it is still working.

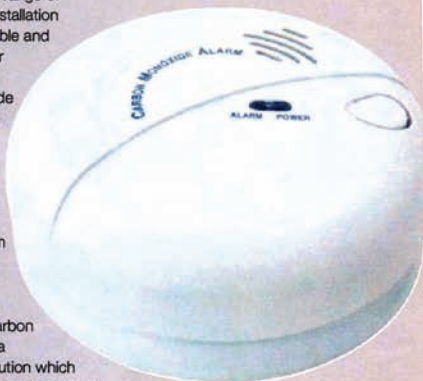
One of the main benefits of this

model for your customers is that it is portable, which on the one hand means that it can be installed very easily, and in addition once it has been sold to the end-user they can even take it on holiday with them as an added precaution in rented accommodation.

### The digital age

In addition to this model, FireAngel also offer a digital model (CO-9D) which is ideal for those who are most at risk such as pregnant women, children and the elderly.

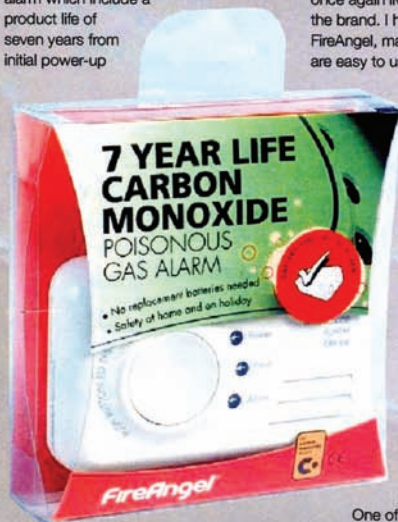
What I really like about this model is



that the digital LCD display shows low levels of CO down to 10ppm and also peak readings over the previous four weeks and therefore it can provide early warning of even low levels of CO in the home, long before they become life threatening. In addition the display can be switched between CO monitor and the integrated digital thermometer.

Once again this is a great model for the retrofit market as it can be installed in minutes and its sleek and unobtrusive design means that it doesn't have to be an eyesore. But despite its petite design, it is a robust alarm which has an internal power pack that will power the alarm for seven years in normal operating conditions.

When I am testing products I almost feel that I have to find something wrong with them otherwise I haven't done my job properly – but in this case I have to admit defeat because it clearly does exactly what it is supposed to with no



hidden niggles or potential for disappointment.

### Play it safe

The last model on the review list is the newly launched mains powered CO alarm from GreenBrook which is being offered with a five year guarantee.

When it comes to CO alarms, GreenBrook isn't the first company that would spring to mind but they have led the way for many years in safety products with their range of RCDs and therefore they have a great reputation to build this new range on.

They have recently conducted extensive research and development which has resulted in a range of five smoke, heat and carbon monoxide alarms which provide the same value for money which they offer with all of their products.

Because it is part of a range, the new ACOM carbon monoxide alarm is suitable for inter-connecting with up to 40 of GreenBrook's smoke, heat and CO alarms which is a good selling point for your customers when they are installing a full system.

Like the other models this is easy to install on either a wall or ceiling and by using the 'quick fix' mounting pattress it can be installed in minutes. It also has an anti-tamper feature which ensures that prying fingers can't do any damage.

Although this is a mains-powered model it comes with a three year lithium battery back-up and to ensure that it is installed correctly, you can't mount the alarm to the fixing plate unless the battery has been correctly installed. It also has a low battery indicator to alert you to when a change is required.

Although this is a deviation in product range from what we would normally expect from GreenBrook I am impressed with this new range and it certainly wouldn't be out of place on the trade counter.



### And finally

Choosing which products you should stock is never going to be an easy decision, particularly when the choice is so extensive. Here are just three different manufacturers which we have tested, but there are of course many more besides these.

What I will say for all of these products is that they would all provide a good source of income and for me, the main reason for stocking any of them is that they come from a name which you can trust – a very important factor in a market where cheap imitations are becoming an increasing problem.

In addition to this, the packaging, as well as the product has been well thought out and each comes in the type of packaging which sells itself. What I mean by this is that if one of your customers picks it up off the shelf it is immediately obvious what it is and what it does, and all the necessary information is on the outside of the pack. So unless you enjoy taking things out of boxes and then struggling to fit it all back in – there is no need to cause yourself this usual headache!

Basically any one of these products will sell well - which one you choose it up to you. But do make sure that you have something in stock, because if you don't you are throwing away a source of easy revenue.

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