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By JESSICA CRAWFORD

- Daily Leader

The Housing and Community Development Department has once again utilized the 1-cent sales tax to ensure the safety of the citizens of Liberal by providing carbon monoxide detectors and smoke alarms through the Safe At Home program.

Those residing within city limits that do not have a working smoke or carbon monoxide detector in their home are invited to go to City Hall or the North Fire Station to obtain the needed detector(s) simply by filling out a short application – at no cost to the applicant.



“We have 200 smoke alarms and 200 carbon monoxide detectors,” Housing and Community Development Director Karen LaFreniere said. “The fire department will have about half of them.”

LaFreniere said the application is very short and to the point.

“It is pretty simple,” she said. “There is just your name and address basically, and a waiver on

the back stating that if it doesn't work it wasn't anything the city did."

After a bid process before the end of 2009, LaFreniere finally settled on First Alert products.

"We actually specked them out and bid them out," she said. "First Alert is the one that we went with. The carbon monoxide detectors run about \$30 in the store and the smoke alarms run about \$20.

"The smoke alarms have the 10 year lithium battery included," she explained. "That is why we got these, so you don't have to change the battery all the time. The carbon monoxide plugs in and have battery backup. This was all funded by the 1-cent sales tax."

Detectors for the hearing impaired will very soon be available for community members in need of them.

"I got approved for them, but haven't got them in yet," LaFreniere said. "I am not sure when, but we will have them available. I am not sure how many we will need, I will start off with maybe five and then go from there."

Liberal Fire Chief Kelly Kirk said it is very important to have such detectors in the home, in fact, he said, it is a Kansas statute to have a working smoke detector in every home.

"In Kansas, it is a state statute that smoke detectors need to be in homes," he said. "That was passed, it seems like maybe in the late '90s. Now, that doesn't mean that the fire department can come knock on your door and ask to check to see if you have one. Just for landlords, they need to provide them in rentals and stuff like that. Not only that, it is just a good idea.

"Early detection of a fire in your home just greatly increases your chances of surviving that fire with no injury or death," he continued. "I think, statistically, that having a working smoke detector cuts your chances of dying in a fire in half. If a fire breaks out during the daytime, usually

someone is going to smell the smoke or see the fire. At home at night, it is the most dangerous time. That is what smoke detectors do, they are an audible device that wakes you up and are watching over you while you sleep.

“Carbon monoxide poisoning happens most in the wintertime, when the house is closed up and people aren’t coming and going – it doesn’t have a chance to exchange fresh air from the inside with the outside,” he added. “If you have something in your home, any hot water tanks, anything that has combustion, open or even closed flame, it can produce carbon monoxide and build up in the home. The hazard of that, it can make you sick – or worse.”

Kirk said the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning can lead to flu-like symptoms, or even death.

“CO2 poison, a lot of times symptoms will mimic the flu,” he said. “Things like headache, nausea or just don’t have any energy or feel like doing anything, those are some of the chronic symptoms that come on a little slower.

“One thing, if it is the wintertime and everyone in the family is feeling like that but there is no temperature or fever, it could well be carbon monoxide build up that is causing that,” he explained. “The higher the concentration of carbon monoxide, the faster the symptoms will come on. In lower concentrations, symptoms can come on in hours, in higher concentrations, they can come on suddenly – within minutes.”

For further information regarding obtaining a carbon monoxide detector or a smoke alarm, visit City Hall or the North Fire Station.

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