

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS POINTER

Dangers of Carbon Monoxide



Cold weather means more households will use natural gas or alternative sources to heat their homes. These options provide a cost-benefit, but they also contain hidden dangers. Between 2010 and 2015 over 2,200 people died from carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning with the highest number of deaths occurring during winter months. CO is created when fuels, such as, wood, coal, propane, natural gas, kerosene, gasoline or oil, burn incompletely. It is colorless, odorless, and cannot be heard. One of the best ways to stay safe is being aware of how to detect CO and how to protect yourself from it. Visit the Centers for Disease Control's website for more information about CO poisoning symptoms <https://www.cdc.gov/features/copoisoning/index.html>

CARBON MONOXIDE SOURCES IN YOUR HOME

CO is formed by a lack of oxygen during the combustion process. Inadequate air-flow can cause this to occur in the following circumstances in the home:

- ✗ Motor vehicle left running in an attached garage
- ✗ Corroded or improperly connected ventilation for a gas water heater or furnace
- ✗ Gas or wood-burning fireplace (obstructed chimney or ventilation)
- ✗ Improperly installed kitchen range or vent
- ✗ Portable gas or kerosene heaters
- ✗ Gas or charcoal grills used inside or in an attached garage

Gas generators can produce significant amounts of CO. If one is used during a power outage, it should be placed in a well ventilated area outdoors, away from all windows, doors or vent openings.

DETECTING CARBON MONOXIDE IN YOUR HOME

- ⇒ Install CO alarms in a centralized location outside each sleeping area. Have them on every level of the home. For best results, interconnect all CO alarms throughout the building so that when on sounds, they all will sound.
- ⇒ Read and follow the manufacturer's instructions for placement and the proper mounting height.
- ⇒ Research and choose an alarm that has been tested by a recognized testing laboratory.
- ⇒ If the warning sound is given by the CO alarm, evacuate immediately to a fresh air location outdoors or next to an open window or door. Make sure everyone in the home has moved to a safe location. Call 911 for help from the fresh air location and stay there until emergency personnel arrive.
- ⇒ Make sure vents for the dryer, furnace, stove and fireplace are clear during and after snow storms.
- ⇒ Test the alarm once a month. Replace batteries every six months or as needed if the low battery chirp is emitted by the alarm. If the alarm continues to chirp after the battery has been replaced, refer to the alarm manual for cleaning, maintenance or replacement instructions.
- ⇒ Many CO alarms have a 5-6 year life expectancy and will require replacement with a whole new unit.

