

CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

Fast Facts

- Carbon monoxide is an invisible, odorless, colorless gas created when fuels (such as gasoline, wood, coal, natural gas, propane, oil, and methane) burn incompletely. **
- Carbon Monoxide can have different effects on people based on its concentration in the air that people breathe, and the person's health condition. ****
- Each year, carbon monoxide poisoning claims approximately 480 lives and sends another 15,200 people to hospital emergency rooms for treatment. ***
- CO poisoning can be confused with flu symptoms, food poisoning and other illnesses with symptoms including shortness of breath, nausea, dizziness, light headedness or headaches. High levels of CO can be fatal, causing death within minutes. **
- Each year over 200 people die from carbon monoxide produced by fuel burning appliances in the home including furnaces, ranges, water heaters and room heaters. ****
- Consumers die when they improperly use gas generators, charcoal grills, and fuel-burning camping heaters and stoves inside their homes or in other enclosed or partially-enclosed spaces during power outages. ***
- A person can be poisoned by a small amount of CO over a longer period of time or by a large amount of CO over a shorter amount of time. **

Preparedness Tips

- ✓ Install a carbon monoxide (CO) alarm (also called detectors) in the hallway of your home near sleeping areas. Avoid corners where air does not circulate.
- ✓ Follow the manufacturer's instructions to test the CO alarm every month.
- ✓ Do not use a CO alarm in place of a smoke alarm. Have both.
- ✓ Before buying a CO alarm, check to make sure it is listed with Underwriter's Laboratories standard 2034, or there is information in the owner's manual that says the alarm meets the requirements of the IAS 6-96 standard.
- ✓ Make sure all household appliances are installed according to manufacturer's instructions and local building codes. Most appliances should be installed by professionals.
- ✓ Have heating systems (including chimneys and vents) inspected and serviced annually, checking for blockages, corrosion, partial and complete disconnections.
- ✓ Only burn charcoal outdoors, never inside a home, garage, vehicle or tent.
- ✓ Always make sure to turn off any gas-powered engine, even if the garage door is open.
- ✓ Do not use gas appliances such as ranges, ovens or clothes dryers for heating your home.
- ✓ Know the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning: headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, sleepiness, and confusion. If you suspect CO poisoning, get to fresh air immediately, and then call 9-1-1.
- ✓ Treat the alarm signal as a real emergency each time. If the alarm sounds and you are not experiencing any symptoms described above, press the reset button. If the alarm continues to sound, call the fire department.
- ✓ Visit www.redcross.org/homefires for more information.