



Carbon Monoxide Poisoning



Richmond Fire Prevention
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During the cold weather, it is more important than ever to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.

At the onset of cold weather, we begin operating appliances and equipment that can generate carbon monoxide gas. This includes ALL fuel-burning equipment and appliances – especially if they malfunction or are improperly ventilated. Every year, this results in hundreds of deaths and many thousands of illnesses.

Among the numerous potential sources of carbon monoxide are furnaces, water heaters, stoves, ovens, kerosene space heaters, wood and gas fireplaces, wood-burning stoves, portable generators, and automobile engines.

Carbon monoxide gas is deadly, even though it is colorless, odorless, and tasteless. It may kill quickly or slowly, and there are no warning signs specific to carbon monoxide. Even when it is not fatal, carbon monoxide can cause permanent damage to the brain and other parts of the nervous system. It affects people of all ages, but Infants and children are even more susceptible than adults.

Carbon monoxide poisoning is lethal and it takes people by surprise. Three things are important to prevent fatal carbon monoxide poisoning: prevention; detection; and rapid, appropriate treatment.

Take simple steps to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.

- ▶ Have your furnace inspected and adjusted before every heating season.
- ▶ Have your chimney, fireplace, and wood stoves, and flues inspected before every heating season.
- ▶ Have chimneys and flues repaired as needed.
- ▶ Ventilate the room every time you use a kerosene space heater.
- ▶ Do not use charcoal grills indoors for cooking or heating.
- ▶ Do not use your oven for heating your home.
- ▶ Do not leave your car's engine running in an enclosed or attached garage.

Take a simple step to detect carbon monoxide: install a carbon monoxide alarm outside of every sleeping area in your home. Should the alarm sound, open the windows, be sure that everyone leaves the area, and call the appropriate number in your area to determine the cause. Be sure that you do determine and eliminate the cause.

Minimize the risks of carbon monoxide exposure, should it occur, with rapid, appropriate treatment. Health care providers and the public must have a high index of suspicion for carbon monoxide poisoning. Symptoms include aches, dizziness, headache, confusion, and other symptoms also found with flu and typical cold-weather viruses.

Consider carbon monoxide poisoning when these symptoms occur in the winter, in enclosed spaces, and in multiple people at the same time. Local poison centers around the country will provide 24-hour assistance. They can help determine if carbon monoxide poisoning is a possibility, refer callers for appropriate medical attention, and work with health care providers as they assess and treat victims.

The American Association of Poison Control Centers is on record as supporting carbon monoxide alarms in residential dwellings and in or near sleeping quarters in places of public accommodation. Poison centers around the country are prepared to respond with information and treatment advice about carbon monoxide poisoning.

To reach your local poison center, anywhere in the country, call **1-800-222-1222**.