



Fire and Life Safety Bulletin

January 2012

Carbon Monoxide....Still Silent and Still a Killer!

Make no mistake; carbon monoxide kills. Carbon monoxide gas is produced when ordinary fuels burn. For example burning gasoline, kerosene, wood, propane and natural gas gives off carbon monoxide. It gives no hint of its presence; it is colorless and odorless. When you breath it in, carbon monoxide prevents your blood cells from carrying enough oxygen. The brain and heart suffer quickly, but even low levels can have long lasting effects. Permanent brain damage can result.



Eliminate this deadly poison from your home!

- Have every appliance that burns gas, wood or kerosene inspected. This includes ovens, stoves, water heaters clothes dryers, fireplaces, wood burning stoves and space heaters.
- Be sure they are operating correctly and that flues, chimneys and vents are clean and in good repair.
- Do not use gasoline powered tools and engines indoors.
- Make sure exhaust fumes from generators cannot enter your home.
- Never leave a car running in an attached garage, even if the garage door is open.
- Clear snow from around vents and pipes such as clothes dryer vents and car exhaust pipes.
- Do not try to heat your home by turning on a gas oven.
- Never burn charcoal or portable fuel burning camping equipment inside a home, garage, vehicle or tent.

Detect carbon monoxide leaks!

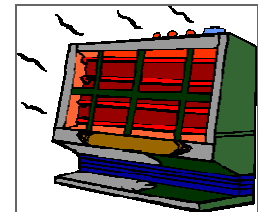
- Install a carbon monoxide alarm in the hallway near every sleeping area in the home. Follow installation instructions, but usually carbon monoxide alarms should be placed on the wall about five feet above the ground. A variety of alarms are available at hardware stores and home centers.
- Check the battery of your carbon monoxide detector at least twice a year.
- If the carbon monoxide alarm sounds, **leave the home immediately and call 911.**

Suspect carbon monoxide poisoning when:

- Headaches, nausea and/or flu like symptoms that clear up when you go outdoors.
- Several people develop symptoms of headache, nausea and fatigue or drowsiness at the same time.

Heating Safety

Annually, heating equipment is involved in an estimated 60,000 reported U.S. home structure fires with associated losses of over one billion dollars. In 2009, 480 civilian deaths and 1,520 civilian injuries were reported relating to heating equipment. The following are tips to keep your family from becoming a statistic.



- When buying a new space heater, make sure it carries the mark of an independent testing laboratory such as Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) or Factory Mutual (FM).
- Keep and maintain a 36 inch clearance between all heating equipment and any combustibles.
- Portable space heaters should be turned off every time you leave the room or go to bed.
- Do not use your oven to heat your home.
- Make sure your fireplace has a sturdy screen to prevent sparks from flying into the room.
- Allow fireplace or woodstove ashes to cool before disposing in a metal container.
- Have your heating system maintained and serviced according to manufacturer's instructions.
- Clean or change furnace filters in forced hot air systems once a month or more often as needed.

Ice Melt Products, Pets and Kids

Crystals and granules intended to melt ice and snow keep walkways safe, but like many useful chemicals they can cause problems if they are misused. Ice melting chemicals commonly contain sodium chloride or rock salt, calcium chloride, potassium chloride, magnesium chloride, and/or carbonyl diamide. The amount used depends on the chemical.



The poison center gets many calls about children who put ice melting crystals into their mouths. Usually this does not cause problems, but some of the chemicals can cause irritation. A child may develop a rash, redness inside the mouth, or drooling. If a child swallows a piece of rock salt or another ice melting crystal, wipe out the child's mouth, give a small glass of milk or water, and wash the child's hands and face. Call the poison center at 1-800-222-1222.

Pets can develop dryness and irritation on their paws and skin if they walk through ice melting chemicals. Wipe all of the product off their paws and fur as soon as they come inside. Then, wash carefully to remove any residue. Pets can develop mouth irritation if they eat the chemicals or resulting melt-water. They may even swallow enough sodium or calcium to poison themselves. If a pet develops drooling, vomiting, seizures, or other symptoms, call your veterinarian right away.

Vehicle Fires

Highway type vehicle fires annually account for 17% of reported fires and approximately 12% of civilian deaths. On average in the U.S., 31 highway vehicle fires are reported per hour. One-third of non-fatal highway vehicle fire injuries occurred when civilians attempted to fight the fire themselves. So how do you protect your self and your vehicle from the threat of fire?



- Have your vehicle inspected at least annually by a trained, professional technician.
- Watch for fluid leaks under vehicles, cracked or blistered hoses, or wiring that is loose, has exposed metal or has cracked insulation. These conditions should be inspected and repaired as soon as possible.
- Be alert to changes in the way your vehicle sounds when running, or to a visible plume of exhaust coming from the tailpipe. A louder than usual exhaust tone, smoke coming from the tailpipe or a backfiring exhaust could mean problems or damage to the high temperature exhaust and emission control system of the vehicle.
- Drive according to posted speed limits and other traffic laws. Remain alert to changing road conditions at all times.

If a fire occurs:

- > **Stop**—if possible, pull to the side of the road and turn off the ignition. Turn off the ignition to shut off the electric current and to stop the flow of gasoline.
- > **Get Out**—Make sure everyone gets out of the vehicle. Then move at least 100 feet away.
- > **Stay Out of the Roadway**—Keep traffic in mind when you leave the vehicle. Stay out of the travel lanes as drivers may be distracted by the fire and not see you.
- > **Stay Up Wind and Up Hill**—Burning flammable liquids could leak from the vehicle and run downhill. Stay out of the smoke as it contains dangerous, noxious gases.

[Smoke Alarms Save Lives.....Are You and Your Family Protected?](#)

Almost two-thirds of reported home fire deaths occur from fires in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms. **Do you have a working smoke alarm?** The Richmond Metro Fire Departments offer free smoke alarms, batteries and installation. All you have to do is call the *Metro Richmond Fire Safety Hotline* toll-free at 1-888-537-5967 to schedule a visit from your firefighters. If you would like, we can even conduct a free home safety survey while we are there. Call today!