



Carbon Monoxide Safety Tips

Dangers of Carbon Monoxide

Each year in Canada, carbon monoxide poisoning takes lives and sends people to hospital emergency rooms for treatment. We would like you to know that there are simple steps you can take to protect yourself and your family from deadly carbon monoxide fumes. Please read and follow the safety tips contained on these pages.

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless odorless gas undetectable to the human senses, so people may not know that they are being exposed. Products that are typically involved in CO poisonings include improperly used or malfunctioning fuel-burning appliances such as furnaces, ranges, water heaters and room heaters; engine-powered equipment such as portable generators, fireplaces and charcoal that is burned in homes and other enclosed areas.

Understanding the Risk

What is carbon monoxide?

Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless and toxic gas. Because it is impossible to see, taste or smell the toxic fumes; CO can kill you before you are aware it is in your home. At lower levels of exposure, CO causes mild effects that are often mistaken for the flu. These symptoms include headaches, dizziness, disorientation, nausea and fatigue. The effects of CO exposure can vary greatly from person to person depending on age, overall health and the concentration and length of exposure.

Where does carbon monoxide come from?

CO gas can come from several sources: gas-fired appliances, charcoal grills, wood-burning furnaces, stoves or fireplaces and motor vehicles.

Who is at risk?

Everyone is at risk for CO poisoning. Medical experts believe that unborn babies, infants, children, senior citizens and people with heart or lung problems are at even greater risk for CO poisoning.

Protect Yourself and Your Family from CO Poisoning

Install at least one carbon monoxide alarm/detector with an audible warning signal near the sleeping areas and/or outside individual bedrooms. Make sure that the detector has been evaluated by a nationally recognized laboratory such as CSA or ULC. Carbon monoxide alarms measure levels of CO over time and are designed to sound an alarm before an average, healthy adult would experience symptoms. It is very possible that you may not be experiencing symptoms when you hear the alarm. This does not mean that CO is not present.

Have a qualified professional check all fuel burning appliances, furnaces, and venting and chimney systems at least once a year.

Never use your range or oven to help heat your home and never use a charcoal grill or hibachi in your home or garage.

Ten Tips to Prevent Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

1. Have all heating equipment installed properly, and have your home's heating system inspected by a professional prior to turning the heat on when cold weather season begins.
2. Carbon monoxide detectors should be installed in all homes and in apartments. When a CO detector goes off, assume that a real CO danger is present and get all persons and pets out of the structure immediately. Do not re-enter until a heating professional or gas company or fire department has declared the area safe from CO.
3. During home renovations, ensure that appliance vents and chimneys are not blocked by tarps or debris. Make sure appliances are in proper working order when renovations are complete.

4. Do not cover the bottom of natural gas or propane ovens with aluminum foil. Doing so might block the air-flow through the appliance and can produce excessive amounts of CO due to incomplete burning of the gas.
5. Never use portable fuel-burning camping equipment inside a home, garage, vehicle or tent unless it is specifically designed for use in an enclosed space and provides instructions for safe use in such an area.
6. Always follow the manufacturer's recommendations for proper installation of your CO detector. Installation locations vary by manufacturer. Manufacturers' recommendations differ to a certain degree based on research conducted with each specific detector.
7. Never operate a portable generator or any other gasoline engine-powered tool either in or near an enclosed space such as a garage, house, or other building, or outside of an open window.
8. Do not use charcoal or hibachi grills to cook with indoors or for heating living areas under any circumstances.
9. Do not attempt to heat your home by turning on the oven or clothes dryer and leaving its door open.
10. Never let a car engine run inside a closed space such as a garage. Drive out promptly after starting the car, and turn the car engine off as soon as you drive into an enclosed space. Never have a garage door closed with a running vehicle inside, even for a few seconds.