



TOWN OF HARRISBURG FIRE DEPARTMENT

6450 Morehead Road, Harrisburg North Carolina 28075

Phone: 704-455-3574 Fax 704-455-6391

www.harrisburgfd.com



Carbon Monoxide & its Dangers

You can't see it, smell it or taste it

You can't see or smell carbon monoxide, but at high levels it can kill a person in minutes. Carbon monoxide (CO) is produced whenever any fuel such as gas, oil, kerosene, wood, or charcoal is burned. If appliances that burn fuel are maintained and used properly, the amount of CO produced is usually not hazardous. However, if appliances are not working properly or are used incorrectly, dangerous levels of CO can result. Hundreds of people die accidentally every year from CO poisoning caused by malfunctioning or improperly used fuel burning appliances. Even more die from CO produced by idling cars. Fetuses, infants, elderly people and people with anemia or with a history of heart or respiratory disease can be especially susceptible. Be safe and practice the Do's and Don'ts of CO Poisoning.

CO Poisoning Symptoms

Know the symptoms of CO poisoning. At moderate levels, you or your family can get severe headaches, become dizzy, mentally confused, nauseated, or faint. You can even die if these levels persist for a long time. Low levels can cause shortness of breath, mild nausea and mild headaches, and may have longer term effects on your health. Since many of these symptoms are similar to those of the flu, food poisoning, or other illnesses, you may not think that CO poisoning could be the cause.

If you experience symptoms that you think could be from CO poisoning:

Do's

- ***GET FRESH AIR IMMEDIATELY.*** Open doors and windows and turn off combustion appliances and ***LEAVE THE HOUSE!!!!***
- ***CALL 911 or VISIT THE EMERGENCY ROOM IMMEDIATELY.*** Tell the first responders, Paramedic or Physician that you suspect CO poisoning. If CO poisoning has occurred it can be diagnosed by a blood test after exposure.
- Have your fuel burning appliances, including oil and gas furnaces, gas water heaters, gas logs, gas ranges and ovens, gas dryers or kerosene space heaters, fireplaces and wood stoves inspected by a trained professional at the beginning of every fall. Make certain that the flues and chimneys are connected, clean and in good condition and that they are not blocked.
- Choose appliances that vent their fumes to the outside whenever possible. Have them properly installed and maintain them according to manufacturer's instructions. Follow the manufacturer's instructions.



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PREVENTION IS THE KEY TO AVOIDING CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING!!!!

DON'T

- Never idle the care in a garage, even if the garage door to the outside is open. CO can build up quickly in the garage and the living space in your home.
- Never use a gas oven to heat your home, not even for a short period of time.
- Never use a charcoal grille indoors – even in a fireplace.
- Never sleep in any room with an un-vented gas or kerosene space heater.
- Never use any gasoline powered engines, mowers, weed trimmers, snow blowers, chain saws or generators in enclosed spaces.
- NEVER ignore symptoms, particularly if more than one person is feeling them. You could lose consciousness and die if you do nothing.

CO Detectors

Carbon Monoxide Detectors are available in stores and you should consider buying one as a back up but not as a replacement for proper use and maintenance of your fuel burning appliances. It is important for you to know that the technology of CO detectors is still developing. There are several types on the market and that are not considered to be as reliable as smoke detectors found in homes today. Some CO detectors have been laboratory tested and their performance varies. Some performed well while others failed to alarm even at very high CO levels, and still others alarmed at very low levels. Unlike smoke detectors, where you can easily confirm the cause of the alarm, CO is invisible and odorless so it is harder to tell if an alarm is false or real emergency. If you consider purchasing one or you already have one in your home and the alarm does activate, treat it like a emergency and call 911 to have it investigated.

So What Do You Do?

First, don't let buying a CO detector lull you into a false sense of security. Preventing CO from becoming a problem in your home is safer than relying on an alarm.

Second, if you shop for a CO detector, do some research on features and don't select solely on the basis of cost. Non-governmental organization such as Consumer's Union (Consumer Reports) the American Gas Association, and Underwriters Laboratories (UL) can help you make an informed decision. Look for UL certifications on any detector you purchase whether it is a CO or Smoke Detector.

Carefully follow manufacturer's instructions for its placement, use and maintenance!



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If the Co detector alarm goes off:

- Make sure it is your CO detector and not your smoke detector.
- Check to see if any member of the household is experiencing symptoms of CO poisoning.
- If symptoms are present, get the person outside immediately and see medical attention (call 911). Be sure to tell First Responders or Physician that you suspect CO poisoning.
- If symptoms are not present, ventilate the home with fresh air, turn off all potential sources of CO (oil or gas furnace, gas water heater, gas range and oven, gas dryer, gas or kerosene space heaters and any vehicle or small engine).
- Have a qualified technician inspect your fuel burning appliances and chimneys to make sure they are operating correctly and that there is nothing blocking the fumes from being vented out of the home.

Harrisburg Fire Department hopes that this guide is helpful in keeping you and your family safe. Keep in mind that this is just a guide, if you if have any questions please do not hesitate to contact us!

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