

January 2007

RM News & Notes



Safety Tip of the Day

10 Steps to Carbon Monoxide Safety *You can't see it, smell it or taste it*

1. **Check the flame color** of your appliances; if it's orange you do have a problem. However, blue does not necessarily mean it's safe.
2. **Check the flue, is it blocked?** Do you have creeping plants growing up your walls? Are birds nesting in your flue? Completely remove these obstructions from the flue area and fit a guard to stop any birds nesting. Get your flue checked to make sure it is drawing properly.
3. **Do you have a horizontal gas grill?** Older appliances can be problematic, plus these can be particularly hazardous. Get it checked to make certain it is working properly or use the electric toaster instead.
4. **Is there adequate ventilation?** Check your air bricks or trickle vents. Have you had double glazing fitted? If the appliances in your home do not have enough air they will produce carbon monoxide.
5. **When were your appliances last checked?** Do it every year. Don't leave it to chance. But remember you're only verifying that they are working properly at the moment they are checked. Get protection year round, fit a CO detector with a low level alarm.
6. **Do you suffer** from unexplained illnesses? Go to your doctor and get a CoHB test if you suspect carbon monoxide exposure. Go directly from the suspected exposure, don't go elsewhere or wait as the CO in your blood will deplete and may not be picked up.
7. **Are you a tenant?** Do you have a safety certificate? Does your landlord annually check the appliances in your accommodation?
8. **Are you a landlord?** Have you been carrying out statutory checks? Even if you have, you may be liable if one of your tenants becomes ill or worse, dies. Fit a detector for your own and your tenants' peace of mind.
9. **We all feel better on holiday.** If you feel especially invigorated it may be that you have been removed from the source of the poison. If your health goes into decline on your return it may be that it's not just post holiday blues, you may be suffering the ill effects from being poisoned from carbon monoxide in your home.
10. **The most important thing** that you can do to protect yourself and your family from the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning is to get a [carbon monoxide detector alarm](#) with a low level indicator.



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Message from the Risk Manager

Although I hadn't made a final decision, Carbon Monoxide Poisoning was one of the topics we were considering for the January issue of *RM News and Notes*. Problem was, I had covered this subject a couple of years ago and figured everyone has heard of the danger of carbon monoxide. Then I read the recent article estimating that 100 people have already been poisoned through the improper use of charcoal grills and generators for heat and light during the power outages in Washington State. So, here it is again. Even if you've seen this before, go ahead and review it again. Share the information with others who might not be as knowledgeable as you are. Remember, carbon monoxide is called the silent killer because you can't see it. You can't taste it. You can't smell it and it doesn't cause any type of skin reaction so you can't even "feel" it. It just quietly displaces the oxygen in your body leading to physical ills, damage and eventually death. So take the warnings seriously, follow precautions. Better yet: Use one of those gift cards you still have from Christmas and buy yourself (or someone you love) a carbon monoxide detector. It might save a life.

Darlene

Safety Officer News and Notes

Quick Tips

- ✓ Have your heating system, water heater, and any other gas, oil or coal-burning appliances serviced by a qualified technician every year.
- ✓ Install a battery operated carbon monoxide detector in your home and check or replace the battery each spring and fall.
- ✓ If your carbon monoxide detector sounds, evacuate your home immediately and call 911.
- ✓ Seek prompt medical attention if you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning and are feeling dizzy, lightheaded or nauseated.
- ✓ Do not use a generator, charcoal grill, camp stove or other gasoline or charcoal burning device inside your home, basement, and garage or near a window.
- ✓ Do not run a car or truck inside a garage attached to your house.
- ✓ Do not heat your home with a gas oven.

The above recommendations provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, GA



What is carbon monoxide?

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a poisonous, colorless, odorless and tasteless gas.

How is it produced in the home?

It is produced by the incomplete burning of solid, liquid, and gaseous fuels. Appliances fueled with natural gas, liquefied petroleum (LP gas), oil, kerosene, coal, or wood may produce CO. Burning charcoal produces CO. Running cars produce CO.

How does CO harm you?

Carbon monoxide is harmful when breathed because it displaces oxygen in the blood and deprives the heart, brain, and other vital organs of oxygen. Many people with CO poisoning mistake their symptoms for the flu, as the initial symptoms of CO poisoning are similar to the flu (but without the fever). Large amounts of CO can overcome you in minutes without warning - causing you to lose consciousness and suffocate. Even low levels can cause permanent damage with prolonged exposure.

What should you do to prevent CO poisoning?

Make sure appliances are installed according to manufacturer's instructions and local building codes. Most appliances should be installed by professionals. Have the heating system inspected and serviced annually. The inspector should also check chimneys and flues for blockages, corrosion, partial and complete disconnections, and loose connections. A carbon monoxide detector/alarm can provide added protection, but is no substitute for proper use and upkeep of appliances that can produce CO. Install a CO detector/alarm in the hallway near every separate sleeping area of the home. Make sure the detector cannot be covered up by furniture or draperies.

What should you do if you are experiencing symptoms of CO poisoning?

If you think you are experiencing any of the symptoms of CO poisoning, get fresh air immediately. Turn off any combustion appliances, and make sure everyone leaves the building. Call your fire department and report your symptoms. You could lose consciousness and die if you do nothing. Prompt medical attention is important if you are experiencing any symptoms and suspect CO poisoning. Before turning your fuel-burning appliances back on, make sure a qualified serviceperson checks them for malfunction.

Safety Stories

Too Close for Comfort

It was a nice day so we had the windows and doors open on the house. I don't remember why, but my husband left his truck running outside, not too far from the back door. Even if I had considered the possibility of carbon monoxide from his truck exhaust, I wouldn't have expected any problem because there was plenty of ventilation from the open windows in the house. We never even noticed any fumes or exhaust from the truck but suddenly the alarm goes off. Our carbon monoxide detector was located in the front living room on the opposite side of the house from the truck. It still surprises me that the carbon monoxide drifted all the way through the house and reached high enough levels to set off the alarm. I'm just glad we had the detector. Otherwise, we never would have known there was a problem. Now, if we leave a vehicle running, we make sure it is nowhere near the house.

