



FACTS ABOUT CARBON MONOXIDE



What is Carbon Monoxide and Why Is It Harmful?

Carbon Monoxide (CO) is often referred to as the silent killer because you cannot see, smell or taste it. Carbon Monoxide is a by-product of combustion produced by anything that burns fuel, such as gas furnaces, water heaters, barbeque grills, wood-burning fireplaces, stoves, alternative power sources and automobiles.

When Carbon Monoxide is breathed, it is absorbed into the bloodstream and displaces oxygen necessary to vital organs. It can eventually cause permanent brain damage and death. Carbon Monoxide is especially dangerous because it cannot be seen or smelled. People may feel ill or become unconscious without realizing they are being poisoned and subsequently, may not be able to get to fresh air.

What are the Symptoms of Poisoning?

Both children and adults can become very ill and even die within minutes or hours of exposure, depending on the concentration of Carbon Monoxide gas. Symptoms and effects vary between individuals, even at the same level of CO exposure, but people typically experience flu-like symptoms, including dizziness, fatigue, weakness, headache or vomiting, trouble breathing, confusion, ringing in the ears, heart fluttering, gastrointestinal complaints, increased blood pressure, or bright red or pink skin, mucous membranes or nails.

However, death from CO poisoning can result even if none of these symptoms occur first. In some cases, people fall unconscious before ever feeling ill.

Some CO poisoning survivors have described drifting in and out of consciousness, but being completely immobilized and unable to get out of the area.

How Do I Prevent Carbon Monoxide Poisoning?

It is critical for everyone to identify potential dangers and take measures to help protect themselves and their families against this serious threat. Installing a Carbon Monoxide detector is an absolute must, and knowing where potential sources of Carbon Monoxide can be produced is also vital.

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Here are some preventive measures:

- Have fuel-burning heating equipment and chimneys inspected by a qualified professional every year before cold weather arrives. During the heating season, clear filters and filtering systems of dust and dirt. Ensure that your furnace flue is clear of snow accumulation.
- Be sure to fully open the flue for adequate ventilation when using a wood burning fireplace. Inspect the pilot lights on natural gas appliances to ensure that the flame is blue. When a flame is mostly yellow in color, it likely is producing Carbon Monoxide.
- For gas fueled clothes dryers, clean out the lint and debris that may build up in the vent which leads to the outside of the house.
- Only use generators in a well-ventilated location outdoors away from windows, doors and vent openings.
- Use barbeque grills only outside and never indoors or in the garage. Never leave an automobile running in a garage, even for a couple of minutes and not even if the overhead garage door is open.
- Install a Carbon Monoxide alarm outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home, including the basement. Ensure that the alarms are plugged all the way in the outlet or, if battery operated, that the detector has working batteries installed. For better protection go a step further and install Carbon Monoxide alarms inside each sleeping area.

What Action Do I Take If My Carbon Monoxide Detector Sounds?

Immediately move to fresh air and dial 911. If you are feeling ill, report that to the 911 Dispatcher. Check that all persons are accounted for – and do not re-enter the premises until the emergency services responders has arrived and determined that your premises are safe to re-enter.

A Carbon Monoxide detector is designed to alert you to its presence of it becomes a critical health risk.

You may need to install more than one Carbon Monoxide detector in your home! Carbon Monoxide is lighter than ambient air, and so it may rise to the highest level in your home.

IMPORTANT! - Carbon Monoxide detectors, like any other mechanical device, eventually wear out. The sensors in Carbon Monoxide detectors degrade over time. Before installing a new detector, make sure you know the years of service life the detector will provide. Use a permanent marker to write the date you first put the detector into service and the date that the detector will reach the end of its life.

If you have questions, please contact the Eagle River Fire Protection District at 970.748.9665 during normal business hours.