



CARBON MONOXIDE SAFETY

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What is it?

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless gas which, when exposed to it, can kill without warning. It claims the lives of hundreds of people every year and makes thousands more ill.

Where it Comes From

Carbon monoxide is produced whenever fuels like gas, propane, wood, oil, charcoal, kerosene, gasoline, or tobacco burn. Without enough fresh air or proper venting, CO can build up and become dangerous.

Common sources of CO include:

- **Home appliances:** furnaces, gas stoves, dryers, water heaters, boilers, fireplaces, wood stoves
- **Portable devices:** space heaters or camping stoves
- **Vehicles /engines /generators** running in enclosed spaces or within 20 feet of open doors and windows
- **Outdoor grills and barbecues**
- **Blocked or damaged vents:** chimneys, flues, intake/exhaust vents

If You Suspect CO in Your Home

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Carbon monoxide is often called “the invisible killer” because it is undetectable by your senses.

Unlike many other toxins, CO doesn’t irritate the body or cause pain, so it can be present without any obvious warning signs. That’s why it’s crucial to pay attention to unexplained physical symptoms, such as:



headache



nausea



weakness



confusion



dizziness



unconsciousness

Carbon monoxide reduces your blood’s ability to carry and use oxygen, which can cause serious health effects - often before you even realize it.

At low levels, symptoms may resemble the flu, including fatigue, headaches, shortness of breath, and difficulty with coordination.

At higher levels or with long-term exposure, you may experience dizziness, chest pain, blurred vision, and trouble concentrating.

Prolonged or severe exposure can lead to unconsciousness, brain damage, or even death. Individuals with heart or lung disease and the elderly are especially vulnerable to CO poisoning. Infants, children, pregnant women, and those who are intoxicated are also at risk.

If you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning, move to fresh air immediately and call 911 or WG+E at (413) 572-0000. Both are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

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How to Prevent CO Exposure

Properly installed and maintained appliances pose very little risk of CO poisoning. To reduce the risk further:

Hire a Professional

- Have a licensed contractor install, inspect, and service your appliances.
- Check exhaust & intake vents regularly to ensure they are secure and in good condition.

Keep Airflow Clear

- Ensure air ducts, exhaust vents, and screens are unobstructed by snow/ice, debris, etc.
- When using a wood-burning fireplace, close the damper only after ashes are fully cooled.
- Always use the exhaust fan when cooking on a gas stove.

Never Use Outdoor Equipment Indoors

- Generators and gas or propane grills, heaters, and lamps are for outdoor use only.
- Don't start gas-powered tools (chainsaws, leaf blowers, lawnmowers, etc.) in enclosed spaces.
- Never start a vehicle in a closed garage; open doors and move outside immediately after starting.

How to Tell if CO is Present

Carbon monoxide detectors can help alert you to increased levels of CO in your home. Every home that has a fuel-burning appliance or heater, an attached garage, or a fireplace needs a carbon monoxide detector.

Carbon monoxide detectors sold in the United States should carry a certification mark from an organization recognized by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and comply with Underwriters Laboratories standard UL 2034, indicating that the device meets U.S. safety requirements.



Install battery-operated CO detectors on every level of your home and within 10' of bedroom doors.



Test detectors monthly to be sure they function properly and replace batteries annually.

Check the expiration date on your detectors and replace as needed.



Have all fuel-burning appliances maintained annually.

IF AN ALARM SOUNDS, do not assume it is faulty. GET TO FRESH AIR IMMEDIATELY and call 911 or WG+E Dispatch at (413) 572-0000.



CAN'T BE
SEEN



CAN'T BE
SMELLED



CAN'T BE
HEARD



CAN BE
STOPPED