



Graham Fire & Rescue

CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an invisible, odorless, colorless gas created when fuels (such as gasoline, wood, coal, natural gas, propane, oil, and methane) burn incompletely. In the home, heating and cooking equipment that burn fuel are possible sources of CO. Vehicles or generators running in an attached garage can also produce dangerous levels of CO.

However, consumers can protect themselves against CO poisoning by properly installing, using, venting, and maintaining their heating and cooking equipment; by installing CO alarms inside their homes; and by being cautious with vehicles or generators in attached garages.

- ✓ If you need to warm up a vehicle, remove it from the garage immediately after starting it. Do not run a vehicle, generator, or other fueled engine or motor indoors, even if garage doors are open. CO from a running vehicle or generator inside an attached garage can get inside the house, even with the garage door open. Normal circulation does not provide enough fresh air to reliably prevent dangerous accumulations inside. If you have any symptoms of CO poisoning, have your vehicle inspected for exhaust leaks.
- ✓ CO poisoning symptoms are: headache, shortness of breath, nausea, vomiting, decreased level of consciousness, unconsciousness, death.
- ✓ Have fuel-burning household heating equipment (fireplaces, furnaces, water heaters, wood stoves, and space or portable heaters) checked every year before cold weather sets in.
- ✓ All chimneys and chimney connectors should be evaluated by a qualified technician to verify proper installation, and to check for cracks, blockages, or leaks. Make needed repairs before using the equipment.
- ✓ Before enclosing central heating equipment in a smaller room, check with your fuel supplier to ensure that air for proper combustion is provided.
- ✓ When using a fireplace, open the flue for adequate ventilation.
- ✓ It is illegal to use a Kerosene heater in a home. When using these heaters in a shop or outbuilding, open a window slightly, and only refuel outside, after the device has cooled.

- ✓ When purchasing new heating and cooking equipment, select products tested and labeled by an independent testing laboratory. Do not accept damaged equipment. Hire a qualified technician to install the equipment. Ask about applicable fire safety and building codes.
- ✓ When purchasing an existing home, have a qualified technician evaluate the integrity of the heating and cooking systems, as well as the sealed spaces between the garage and house.
- ✓ When camping, remember to use battery-powered heaters and flashlights in tents, trailers, and motorhomes.
- ✓ Boat operators should be aware that CO is emitted from any boat's exhaust. When your boat is moored or anchored alongside others, be aware of the effect your exhaust may have on those vessels and vice versa. The trim of the boat, as well as side curtains, can contribute to increased concentrations of CO by altering the airflow. Fuel burning appliances located in accommodation spaces need to be properly ventilated and maintained.
- ✓ Only use barbecue grills outside. Never use them in the home or garage.
- ✓ CO alarms are not substitutes for smoke alarms. Smoke alarms react to fire by-products, before CO alarms would sound. Smoke alarms give earlier warning of a fire, providing more time to escape.
- ✓ To guard against smoke and fire, be sure that your home has working smoke alarms on every level and directly outside and inside all sleeping rooms
- ✓ Know the difference between the sound of the smoke alarms and the sound of the CO alarms.
- ✓ Have a home escape plan for any home emergency and practice the plan with all members of the household regularly, at least twice a year.