

Carbon Monoxide Safety Tips

Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless and tasteless gas. Carbon monoxide combines with hemoglobin in our blood and robs the blood of the oxygen. Early symptoms include headache, fatigue, nausea, and confused thinking. Without treatment, the victim will lose consciousness, and if no help is given, lose their life.

Carbon monoxide is produced by combustion. Common causes are:

- Defective gas or oil furnaces and water heaters
- Cracked chimney flues
- Indoor use of charcoal grills
- Use of a gas oven or range to warm a room
- Running a car in an enclosed area
- Closing the fireplace damper before the fire is completely out

Carbon monoxide accidents are preventable. Actions you should take to protect your family are:

- Every fall you should have a qualified technician inspect your gas furnace and appliances.
- Never allow your car to run in an enclosed area, especially if it is attached to your house.
- Make sure your fireplace is in good repair and do not close the damper before the fire is out.
- Install CO alarms to give your family a warning if CO is building up in your house.

One type of alarm is plugged into a wall socket and has a life of about 10 years. The other type of alarm uses a chemical sensor and battery. The sensor/battery unit has a two year limited warranty and indicates a low battery. Make sure to replace the battery when needed. CO alarms can be purchased at a local hardware store.

Carbon monoxide alarms should be located on every floor and mounted according to the manufacturer's instructions. If the alarm goes off, everyone should get out of the house at once and call the fire department by dialing 911 from a neighbor's house. Do not ventilate your house by opening doors and windows.

