Carbon Monoxide

Winter Storm Warning!

- **Poisonous**
- **Odorless**
- **Colorless**
- **Tasteless**

Winter snows can create drifts that block exhaust vents, forcing Carbon Monoxide gas (CO) to back-up into your home. High efficiency appliances and those with power-vent blowers by definition waste less heat, so the exhaust air temperature is very low. Often it is too low to melt snow in a plugged exhaust pipe or vent. Keep sidewall and direct vents clear of obstructions, drifting snow and bushes to provide proper ventilation.

Hundreds of people accidentally die each year from CO poisoning caused by malfunctioning or improperly used fuel-burning appliances. (EPA data) According to the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), carbon monoxide is the number one cause of poisoning deaths in the U.S.

Carbon Monoxide gas is produced whenever any fuel, such as gas, oil, kerosene, wood or charcoal is burned.

SYMPTOMS of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

CO enters the lungs and blood where it competes with oxygen normally carried by red blood cells. CO attaches to the cells 200 times easier than oxygen. Without oxygen cells begin to die.

Exposure to carbon monoxide can produce *flu-like symptoms* such as:

- headache
- nausea
- dizziness
- confusion
- fainting

At higher levels, CO exposure can cause:

- unconsciousness
- death

What to do if you suspect CO **EXPOSURE**;

- Get out of the house and get fresh air.
- Call the fire department from a neighbor's house.
- If you have symptoms, seek medical help immediately.

(over)

FireFACTORS

Office of the State Fire Marshal
Department of Fire Services

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PROTECT your family:

- Install Carbon Monoxide detectors in your home.
- Make sure that any detector you purchase is approved and certified by a nationally recognized testing institute, such as Underwriters Laboratory (UL).
- Follow installation instructions carefully.
- Locate CO detectors near bedrooms so family members will awaken at night.
- Place them where people spend most of their time, where they will be heard, and where they can be seen.
- Do not place a CO detector in a garage, furnace room, near the stove or fireplace.
- Detectors should be kept away from open windows or doors, excessively hot, cold or damp areas and “dead-air spaces” such as corners of rooms and peaks of ceilings.

If appliances that burn fuel are properly maintained and used, the amount of CO produced is usually not hazardous.

Read and follow the manufacturer’s instructions that come with fuel-burning devices.

However, *if appliances are not working properly or are used incorrectly*, dangerous levels of CO can result.

- Have a qualified service technician inspect your appliances yearly, before the heating season.
- Check vent pipes, flues and chimneys for leaks or blockages.
- Never use a charcoal grill indoors!
- Do not use a gas oven to heat your home.
- Don’t leave a vehicle running inside a garage, even if the door is open, fumes will build up quickly inside the home.
- Don’t sleep in any room with an un-vented, gas heater.
- Never use gasoline-powered engines (generators, chain saws, blowers, weed trimmers, mowers or snow blowers) in enclosed spaces.