

MAFES Dawg Tracks



October 20, 2008 *Carbon Monoxide: The Silent Killer*



Carbon monoxide poisoning is a serious problem that can result in fatal consequences. With this thought in mind, we should be fully aware of the dangers and take steps to safeguard against this silent killer.

What is Carbon Monoxide? Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless, tasteless deadly gas created when gas burns. Any heating system or appliance that burns gas, oil, wood, propane or kerosene is a potential source of carbon monoxide in your home, buildings or workshop.

You may be exposed to carbon monoxide gas when:

- You leave your motor vehicle engine running.
- Your home contains an incorrectly vented or malfunctioning water heater, furnace, space heater, fireplace, or stove.
- You burn charcoal, alcohol, or gasoline in an enclosed tent, camper, or room.
- You smoke a cigar, cigarette or a pipe.

Carbon monoxide prevents oxygen from being used by your body. It is poisonous and can cause harm to your central nervous system. Everyone is at risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. Individuals with existing heart and lung disease problems and the elderly are especially vulnerable, as are infants, children, and pregnant women.

Symptoms of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning:

Primary Symptoms -

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| (1) Headaches | (5) Nausea |
| (2) Dizziness | (6) Weakness |
| (3) Rapid Heartbeat | (7) Blurry Vision |
| (4) Loss of Hearing | |

Secondary or Later Symptoms -

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| (1) Vomiting | (5) Disorientation |
| (2) Coma | (6) Seizures |
| (3) Respiratory Failure | (7) Cardiac Arrest |
| (4) Loss of Consciousness | |

When Should You Suspect Carbon Monoxide Poisoning:

When -

- Your whole family is sick at the same time.
- The flu-like symptoms disappear when you are away from your home.
- Illnesses are present when gas appliances are in use.
- Excessive moisture is present on the interior of the windows.

STEPS TO TAKE TO MINIMIZE THE RISK OF CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING:

- Have your fireplace and furnace checked for cracks, gaps, rust, corrosion or debris by a qualified professional before the start of each season.
- Have gas appliances checked each year by a qualified technician. Stove burners should be cleaned and adjusted to minimize the amount of carbon monoxide produced. Gas dryer vents should be checked for lint buildup that could restrict ventilation.
- Use non-electrical space heaters (gas, kerosene, or propane) only in well ventilated areas. Refrain from using these in the home.
- Never start or leave trucks, tractors, self-contained implements or other vehicles running in enclosed areas.
- Do not use barbecue grills indoors or use stove tops or ovens that operate on flammable fuels to heat your home.