

MAFES Dawg Tracks



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Carbon Monoxide
(CO) Safety



Every year in the U.S. carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning claims the lives of approximately 400 people and sends another 20,000 to the hospital for treatment. You can't see or smell it, but at high levels it can kill you in minutes. Carbon monoxide is produced anywhere that fuels such as gas, oil, kerosene, wood or charcoal is burned. If fuel-burning appliances are maintained and used properly, the amount of is usually not a hazardous. If they are not maintained and used properly, dangerous levels of carbon monoxide can result. Hundreds of people die each year from improperly maintained fuel-burning appliances and even more die from CO produced through idling automobiles.

CARBON MONOXIDE (CO) SYMPTOMS –

Get acquainted or totally familiar with the symptoms of CO poisoning which will cause severe headaches, dizziness, mental confusion, nausea or fainting spells. Even moderate levels that persist for long periods of time can result in death. Low levels can cause shortness of breath, mild nausea, and mild headaches. Low levels can have long term effects on your life. Since these symptoms are similar to those of flu, food poisoning or other illnesses, it is possible to have CO poisoning before you realize it.

PLAY IT SAFE –

If you experience symptoms and suspect CO poisoning:

- **Do get fresh air immediately** – Open doors, windows, vents, turn off combustion appliances and leave the home.
- **Do go to an Emergency room** – Inform your doctor that you suspect CO poisoning. It can be quickly diagnosed with a blood test soon after exposure.
- **Do Be Prepared** – To answer the following questions for the doctor:
 - ~ Do your symptoms occur only in your home? Do they disappear or decrease when you leave home and reappear when you return?
 - ~ Is anyone else in your home complaining of similar symptoms?
 - ~ Did everyone's symptoms appear at about the same time?
 - ~ Are you using fuel-burning appliances in your home?
 - ~ Has the appliances been inspected lately? Are you sure that they are working properly?

PREVENT CARBON MONOXIDE (CO) POISONING BY:

- Having a trained professional at the start of the season to check all fuel-burning appliances in your home, as well as flues and chimneys.
- Selecting appliances for your home that have outside vents for fumes: Make sure that they are properly installed and maintained according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Reading all instructions that accompany a fuel-burning device. If you cannot avoid using an unvented gas or kerosene heater, carefully follow all the cautions for their use. Also, be sure to use the recommended fuel, leave doors to adjacent rooms open for ventilation and crack a window just enough to allow for ventilation.
- Not leaving vehicles idling in the garage or other enclosed buildings.
- Avoiding the use of gas ovens for heating in any enclosed room, even for a short time.
- Avoiding the use of charcoal or gas grills inside the home or any enclosed building.
- Avoiding sleeping in a room with an unvented gas heater or a kerosene space heater.
- Avoiding the use of any gas powered appliances like weed trimmers, mowers, edgers, snow blowers, chain saws, small engines or generators in enclosed spaces.
- Ignoring symptoms of CO poisoning, especially if one or more persons are experiencing the same reaction. You could lose consciousness and die if nothing is done.

CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS –

CO detectors should be installed in all of our homes and businesses, but not as a replacement for smoke detectors.

These are for extra added security. Following are some tips in using CO detectors:

- Choose a unit with an approved UL certification.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for proper installation.
- Test the alarms once a month; replace them according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Contact your local fire department to get a number in case the alarm goes off.
- CO detectors should be installed in every bedroom on all levels and in other locations according to local rules and codes.
- If audible alarm sounds, check for low batteries. If it continues after changing batteries, call the fire department.
- CO detectors are no substitute for smoke alarms.

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Excerpts: www.nfpa.org
www.epa.gov
www.usfa.dhs.gov
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