

## **Protect Your Family from Carbon Monoxide Poisoning**

The 2006 Minnesota legislative session passed a carbon monoxide law requiring carbon monoxide (CO) alarms in homes built after January 1, 2007. All existing, single-family homes were required to have CO alarms by August 1, 2008, and multi-family housing by August 1, 2009. To find out more about this law, go to the Minnesota Fire Marshal website at [dps.mn.gov/divisions/sfm](http://dps.mn.gov/divisions/sfm). Select "Public Education" from the orange menu bar and click "Fire Safety."

### **Facts**

- CO is a gas you can't see, taste or smell. CO is released when fuels like natural gas, oil, wood, kerosene or charcoal don't have enough oxygen to burn efficiently. This poisonous gas can escape into a home, car or garage and kill people.
- CO can accumulate inside the home from a variety of sources, including furnaces and water heaters, gas or kerosene space heaters, gas boilers, gas ranges and ovens, gas dryers, charcoal or gas grills, fireplaces and wood stoves, vehicles, and yard equipment with gasoline-powered engines
- Exposure to low levels of CO can cause flu-like symptoms – nausea, dizziness, drowsiness, weakness, intense headaches and shortness of breath. Higher levels can result in unconsciousness or death.
- People most vulnerable to the effects of CO include pregnant women, the elderly, small children, people with lung problems or other chronic health conditions, and people engaging in strenuous physical activity.
- CO is most likely to accumulate during the winter months, when a heating system is in use and the home has been sealed and insulated against the cold.

### **Safe Behavior**

#### **To protect yourself and your family from CO poisoning:**

- Install a UL-listed carbon monoxide alarm in your home that will sound when potentially dangerous levels of CO are present. All homes should have BOTH a CO alarm and a smoke detector. A smoke detector does not warn you when CO is present. CO alarms and smoke detectors can be purchased at discount hardware and building supply stores.
- Have a qualified technician inspect your furnace and check fuel-burning appliances in the fall. Make sure your furnace has an adequate air supply. Make sure your heating system and all fuel-burning appliances are adequately vented and properly maintained.

- When using a fireplace, wood stove or space heater, provide adequate ventilation.
- Portable propane camping equipment and gas barbecues are approved for outdoor use only. They should never be used inside cabins, tents, fish houses, recreational vehicles or boats. Read labels on recreational appliances and follow manufacturer's operating instructions.
- If your car is stuck in the snow, make sure that the exhaust (tail pipe) is cleared before starting the car engine. Be sure the exhaust is free of snow and check it periodically if you use the engine for heat. Watch for symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning.
- During power outages, do not use gasoline engines or burn charcoal in enclosed spaces, including a garage, even if the door is open. Do not use gas stoves or ovens to heat living areas.

### **Additional Materials**

- **Minnesota Department of Commerce**
  - [Combustion and Makeup Air](#)
  - [Home Heating](#)
  - [House Diagnostic Services](#)
- **Minnesota Poison Control System**
  - [Carbon Monoxide Fact Sheet](#)
- **Minnesota Department of Health**
  - [Preventing Carbon Monoxide in Your Home](#)
  - [Preventing Carbon Monoxide Poisoning During Power Outages](#)
  - [Healthy Homes](#)

### **Contact**

- Minnesota Department of Health Indoor Air Unit  
Phone: 651-201-4601 or 800-798-9050 8:00 a.m.- 4:30 p.m.  
Web site: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/air/index.htm>