

# News



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **DPH: Take Steps to Prevent Carbon Monoxide Poisoning**

Many people use generators improperly; Video highlights how to prevent CO poisoning

**Hartford** – With colder weather upon us and furnaces in use, the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) warns residents of the dangers of carbon monoxide (CO) and asks that they take steps to prevent deadly CO poisoning.

Health officials say that to stay safe in their homes, residents should have their heating systems serviced and carbon monoxide detectors installed and maintained. Last year, a Connecticut family escaped from their house after a carbon monoxide leak from their furnace. The alarm in the carbon monoxide detector they had installed in the home went off after midnight and alerted them to the danger. Several of the family members had been experiencing symptoms of CO poisoning – dizziness and headache – but did not recognize the symptoms. The CO levels found in the house were at levels that could cause death.

“This family was fortunate because they had installed a CO detector which very likely saved their lives. But every year hundreds of Connecticut residents are taken to the emergency department due to carbon monoxide exposure. Some are hospitalized and even die from CO poisoning,” said DPH Epidemiologist Brian Toal. “That is why it is critical that every homeowner have a properly installed CO detector in their home. Often times, CO detectors are the only way to know that the deadly gas is present. We recommend that residents install CO detectors near all sleeping areas in their home to alert them of the presence of CO.”

According to DPH, last year there were 310 emergency department visits for unintentional non-fire related CO poisoning in Connecticut, and 16 unintentional non-fire related hospitalizations due to CO.

When power goes out many people run portable generators inside or close to the home, or use charcoal grills inside the home. DPH survey data shows that more than half of the people surveyed ran their generators improperly. Generators should be placed at least 20 feet from the house and never inside the house, enclosed porch or attached garage. Charcoal grills should never be used indoors.

CO is an invisible, odorless gas that can be fatal. The symptoms of CO poisoning can mimic those of the flu, including headache, fatigue, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, or loss of consciousness. If several members of a household experience these symptoms when they are home, but feel better when they are away from the home, there may be a CO problem.

DPH offers the following safety tips to prevent CO poisoning:

- Install a carbon monoxide detector near sleeping areas. Install new batteries at least once a year and replace detectors every five to ten years according to the manufacturer's directions, as the sensors degrade.
- Have your heating systems, chimney flues, gas appliances and generators checked every year, and cleaned and serviced as needed by qualified heating/appliance contractors.
- Never use portable generators, pressure washer engines, or other gasoline-powered equipment (including tools) inside your home, garage, carport, basement or other enclosed spaces. Be sure to place portable generators at least 20 feet from your home.
- Use gasoline-powered equipment outside and away from doors, windows or air intake vents.
- Use grilling apparatus such as charcoal or gas grills outdoors only.
- Opening windows and doors, and operating fans is **NOT** sufficient to prevent buildup of CO in a home.
- Get out of the house and seek medical help **immediately** if you or a family member has unexplained/sudden onset of symptoms of CO poisoning. Symptoms include headache, fatigue, dizziness, nausea or vomiting, and loss of consciousness.
- Call **911** from a cell phone or neighbor's home and the Connecticut Poison Control Center at **1-800-222-1222**.

DPH developed a video, *Carbon Monoxide: The Silent Killer*, to help raise awareness of the dangers of CO and how to prevent poisoning. It is available online in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

For more information on carbon monoxide poisoning and prevention:

DPH: [www.ct.gov/dph/co](http://www.ct.gov/dph/co)  
860-509-7742  
[Connecticut Poison Control Center](#)  
800-222-1222

For more information on carbon monoxide detectors:

[Underwriters Laboratories, Inc.](#)

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