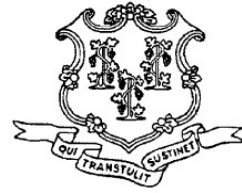


News



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With Colder Weather Coming, DPH Reminds Residents of the Dangers of Carbon Monoxide

Installation of carbon monoxide detectors in residences saves lives every year.

Hartford – As the cold weather approaches and the heating season begins, the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) reminds residents of the dangers of carbon monoxide (CO). To stay safe in their homes, residents should have their heating systems serviced and carbon monoxide detectors installed and maintained. DPH also warns against the improper use of portable generators during power outages.

A recent survey of Connecticut residences showed that the number of CO detectors in Connecticut homes has steadily risen from 56.8% in 2006 to 67.6% in 2012. While it is encouraging to see this upward trend, too many Connecticut homes are still without CO detectors.

CO detectors are especially important given the number of CO poisoning cases reported during the four major storms the state experienced in the past two years. For example, during and after the October snowstorm in 2011, there were 134 poisonings and five deaths caused by CO exposure. In an average year, there are approximately 100 CO poisonings and four deaths. Many of the affected people did not have CO detectors.

During the storms, many people ran portable generators inside or close to the home or used 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.

“Every winter hundreds of Connecticut residents are taken to the emergency department due to carbon monoxide exposure from malfunctioning furnaces, improperly placed portable generators and indoor use of charcoal grills,” stated DPH Epidemiologist Brian Toal. “Some are hospitalized and even die from CO poisoning. That is why it is critical that every homeowner have a properly installed CO detector in their home.”

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.

Often times, CO detectors are the only way to know that the deadly gas is present. DPH recommends that residents install CO detectors near all sleeping areas in their home to alert them of the presence of CO.

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**.

For more information on carbon monoxide poisoning and prevention:

- CT DPH Environmental & Occupational Health Assessment Program
www.ct.gov/dph/co 860-509-7742
- Connecticut Poison Control Center
<http://poisoncontrol.uchc.edu> 800-222-1222

For more information on carbon monoxide detectors:

- Underwriters Laboratories, Inc. www.ul.com

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