

CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING & HOW TO PREVENT IT FROM HAPPENING TO YOU THIS WINTER

Every winter over 430 people die from carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. When the temperature drops and furnaces, fireplaces and space heaters are used for heating there is a risk of CO exposure. CO is considered a “silent killer” because it is an invisible and odorless gas. The Town and MLFPD would like to remind residents to take actions to prevent injury or death from CO poisoning:

- Purchase CO detectors and place one on every level of your home
- Inspect your fireplace and heater on an annual basis to determine that they are working properly

What causes carbon monoxide poisoning?

CO is a colorless, odorless gas made when fuel burns. Fuels include wood, gasoline, coal, natural gas, propane or kerosene. Breathing in carbon monoxide fumes prevents the body from using oxygen properly, which can harm the brain, heart, and other organs. Long enough exposure will lead to permanent brain damage or death. Everyone is at risk for CO poisoning but infants, children, pregnant women, people with underlying health issues and older adults are at greater risk.

- Never use a gas range or oven for heating
- Never patch a vent pipe
- Never use a portable gas camp stove indoors
- Never use a generator inside your home, basement, or garage
- Make sure your gas appliances are vented properly
- Do not let your vehicle warm up in the garage

When do most carbon monoxide poisonings occur and why?

Most carbon monoxide exposures happen in the winter. The most common source of CO poisoning is unvented, fuel burning, space heaters in the home. An unvented space heater uses combustible fuel and indoor air for the heating process. It vents the gases it makes into the room, instead of outdoors. A space heater that is not installed right or not working properly can release carbon monoxide and other toxic fumes into the room and use up much of the oxygen in the room. Most space heaters use kerosene, propane or natural gas for fuel. Newer models have oxygen sensors that shut off the heater when the oxygen level in the room falls below a certain level. Older models do not have this safety feature. Because of these safety problems, some states ban unvented space heaters.



Figure 1 - newer model portable propane heater

Are there requirements for CO detectors?

Yes, all residential units require CO detectors, regardless of the heat source used.

The Town assures compliance with this requirement during the building permit process, but we encourage property owners to proactively purchase and install CO alarms/detectors.

Who can I contact with questions?

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