



Office of the State Fire Marshal

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ILLINOIS STATE FIRE MARSHAL WARNS OF CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING DANGERS

Carbon Monoxide is a Silent Killer; Poisoning Cases Increase during Winter Season

SPRINGFIELD – Due to extremely low temperatures and winter storms in the Midwest this winter, the Illinois Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) is stepping up its efforts to raise awareness about fire safety as well as the danger of carbon monoxide poisoning. The Fire Marshal is urging homeowners to be aware of the dangers that carbon monoxide poses.

“We urge residents to be proactive and check batteries on the carbon monoxide detectors to make sure they will work when needed,” State Fire Marshal Larry Matkaitis said. “Don’t let that silent killer take the lives of your loved ones. CO alarms save lives.”

Matkaitis noted that the Illinois Carbon Monoxide Detector Act, adopted in 2007, requires the installation of carbon monoxide alarms in every dwelling unit, with at least one working CO alarm within 15 feet of every room used for sleeping purposes.

Carbon monoxide is an odorless, tasteless and invisible gas that can be deadly when high levels are inhaled. The noxious gas is produced due to faulty or poorly repaired appliances such as furnaces, boilers, water heaters, gas heaters, and dryers. Dirty and poorly maintained wood fireplaces, blocked chimneys and gas space heaters can also produce carbon monoxide poisoning, especially if ventilation is not adequate. A vehicle with the engine running in a closed garage can cause lethal levels of CO gas within minutes.

The effects of carbon monoxide poisoning are immediately observable. Common symptoms of CO poisoning include headaches, nausea, difficulty breathing, loss of balance, vision problems, and dizziness. Symptoms of high levels of CO can include disorientation, memory problems, loss of consciousness, and death.

The OSFM offers the following tips to prevent CO poisoning:

- Have your home heating systems (including chimneys and vents) inspected and serviced annually by a trained service technician.
- Never use portable generators inside homes or garages, even if doors and windows are open.
- Keep household appliances in good working order, and use them safely. Make sure all servicing is carried out by fully qualified and registered professionals.

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- Do not use gas ranges or ovens for heating.
- Keep air vents open and unobstructed. Make sure all rooms are well ventilated.
- Chimneys and flues should be cleaned thoroughly at least once a year.
- Never bring a charcoal grill into the house for heating or cooking. Do not barbeque in the garage.
- Open the fireplace damper before lighting a fire and keep it open until the ashes are cool. An open damper may help prevent build-up of poisonous gases inside the home.
- Install battery-operated carbon monoxide alarms or CO alarms with battery backup on each level of your home if you have an attached garage, or your home has fuel burning appliances. Know the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning: headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, sleepiness, and confusion.
- If carbon monoxide poisoning is suspected, get outside to fresh air immediately and then call 911.

For more information about CO poisoning prevention visit the OSFM website at:
www.sfm.illinois.gov