

State of Connecticut, Department of Developmental Services
Southbury Training School Fire Department
DDS Fire Safety and Emergency Guidelines

INFORMATIONAL SHEET

CARBON MONOXIDE: THE INVISIBLE KILLER

Every year in America, carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning claims more than 500 lives while sending another 15,000 people to hospitals for treatment. What makes this even more tragic is CO poisoning can be easily prevented.

What is Carbon monoxide and who is at risk?

Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless and toxic gas that can kill you before you are aware it is in your home. This gas can come from several sources: oil and/or gas-fired appliances, charcoal grills, wood burning furnaces or fireplaces and motor vehicles. Everyone is at risk but medical experts believe that unborn babies, infants, children, senior citizens and people with heart or lung problems are at greater risk for CO poisoning. Obviously, CO can be found everywhere and with the colder weather and with homes “closed up” for winter, more people will become its victim.

What are the symptoms of CO poisoning?

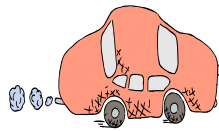
The health effects of CO depend on the level of CO and the length of exposure. An individual’s health condition is also a determining factor. Often, people may appear to be suffering from the flu and are misdiagnosed. These symptoms include dizziness, fatigue, headaches, nausea and irregular breathing.

What can I do to reduce possible exposure to CO?

1. Make sure all of your fuel-burning appliances operate properly and have been installed according to manufacturer’s instructions and local building codes.



2. Check all chimney’s and flues for blockages, corrosion, partial and complete disconnections and loose connections.
3. Never warm a car up in an attached garage, even if the door is open. Cars parked in the driveway should be parked with the front of the car facing the house/buildings



4. Install a CO detector. Follow the manufacturer's suggestion for proper placement and maintenance. Make sure furniture or draperies do not cover up the alarms.

What should I do if my CO detector goes into alarm?

Evacuate and Call 911. Relay to the dispatcher that there is a Carbon Monoxide Alarm activation and let them know if anyone is feeling ill. Do not re-enter the building. In order to determine the level of CO it must be metered by the responding fire department. Opening windows and doors will decrease the level of CO through ventilation. It will be impossible to determine an accurate CO level after ventilation. The source of the CO will be identified and a qualified professional will need to be called in to repair the source of the CO.

⇨ REMEMBER ⇨

Never ignore a CO detector/alarm. Remember, since CO is impossible to see, taste or smell it can kill you before you are aware of its presence. Proper installation and maintenance is your first line of defense. Respond to every alarm appropriately and never assume any alarm is a false alarm.

For more information on Carbon Monoxide Emergencies:

- Reference the revised 2005 DDS Fire Safety and Emergency Guidelines- ***NOW available on the DDS Website: <http://www.ct.gov/dds>***
- Contact your Facility Management Personnel
- Contact your local Fire Marshal or Fire Department
- Contact the Southbury Training School Fire Department at 203-586-2444

Reference material:

- DDS Fire safety and Emergency Guidelines
- www.usfa.dhs.gov
- www.cpsc.gov