

## IEQ NEWS

*We care about indoor air*

Winter 2007

Issue #2

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**What's New?****Environmental Hazards in the Home: A Guide for Homeowners, Homebuyers, Landlords & Tenants.**

A collaboration between the CTDPH and the Connecticut Association of Realtors.

Available at: [www.dph.state.ct.us](http://www.dph.state.ct.us) or [www.ctrealtor.com/consumer](http://www.ctrealtor.com/consumer).

**Connecticut Guidelines for Mold Abatement Contractors**

Available at: [www.dph.state.ct.us](http://www.dph.state.ct.us)

**Fact Sheet: Carbon Monoxide**

Available at: [www.dph.state.ct.us](http://www.dph.state.ct.us)

**In the News**

School Evacuated After CO Detected

<http://www.wfsb.com/news/10534515/detail.html>

Environmental and Occupational Health  
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**FOCUS on: CARBON MONOXIDE (CO)**

CO is an invisible, odorless gas that can be fatal. The symptoms of CO poisoning 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 home, there may be a CO problem.

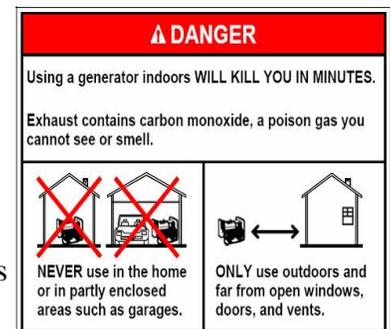
If CO is suspected in the home—leave the home immediately! Once outside, call 911.

The winter season often brings power outages. More people are using gas powered portable generators during these times. Portable generators emit CO and must ALWAYS be run outdoors. The

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and the Underwriters Laboratory (UL) have developed a new warning label for portable generators.

**CO detectors:**

- Install a carbon monoxide detector near sleeping areas
- Use only detectors certified by Underwriter Laboratories (UL)
- Detectors should be permanently installed with a battery backup
- Test alarms frequently; change batteries annually.



All of the following items can produce CO when not used and /or ventilated properly:

Gas dryers

Gas, wood, kerosene and pellet stoves

Snowblowers/lawnmowers

Gasoline powered-power tools

Gas and Oil Furnaces

Portable generators

Gas and charcoal grills

Auto exhaust



# Technically Speaking: CO Detectors

## IMPORTANT NEW INFORMATION

### Sensors Don't Last Forever

The chip that measures CO has a limited lifespan. Most CO Detectors are designed to last 2 to 3 years. Some last up to five years. It is best to replace the CO detector with a new one if it is more than 5 years old.

### The "Test" Button on the CO Detector

Pushing the "test" button on your CO detector lets you know that electricity is flowing through the circuit and can set off the alarm. **IT DOES NOT CHECK THE SENSOR TO SEE IF IT IS CAPABLE OF DETECTING CO!** The only way to check the sensor is to purchase a CO test kit. This consists of a vial of CO gas of known concentration (i.e., 1000 ppm), and some type of enclosure housing. Kits can be purchased on the Internet for under \$20.00

### Changes in Test Standards

Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) and the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) jointly issued new standards for CO alarms intended for protection in ordinary indoor locations of dwelling units. These locations include recreational vehicles, mobile homes, and recreational boats with enclosed accommodations spaces and cockpit areas.

The new standards state that **as of 2005, CO detectors are prohibited from showing readings below 30 ppm on digital displays**, although the information is stored in detectors with a memory function, and can be recalled. Peak levels can be viewed regardless of level by pushing a button.

This standards change means that traditionally available, digital readout instruments marketed for residential use will no longer be available for self-monitoring low level, long-term exposure at levels below 30 ppm.

Health personnel should be aware that there is a public health risk with long term, low level exposure to CO, especially among the elderly, very young, and debilitated populations. Information on the health effects of low level exposure to CO can be found in the DPH CO Fact Sheet available at: [www.dph.state.ct.us/BRS/EOHA/iaqcm.htm](http://www.dph.state.ct.us/BRS/EOHA/iaqcm.htm)

Another standards change affects the alarm level. **As of 2005, CO alarms will be prohibited from being sounded at concentrations below 70 ppm.**

Both of these changes were made to decrease the number of "false" alarm calls being made to fire stations and first responders.



## Tools for Schools (TfS) Update

The TfS program made great progress this fall. Over 145 schools were trained, bringing the total number of CT schools that have implemented the program to 670. The Resource Team is working to help sustain the existing programs, and have provided "refresher" training for 73 schools in 14 districts. In addition, we have developed an "Advanced TfS for Custodians & Facilities Personnel" workshop which is offered to all custodial/facilities staff in a district.

In recent months, we have collected some very good evidence that TfS is having a positive impact on CT schools, including health outcome data. To view a copy of the fact sheet, "TfS Success Stories," go to <http://www.dph.state.ct.us/BRS/EOHA/iaqcm.htm>.



## Literature Review

Noninvasive Carboxyhemoglobin (COHb) Monitoring: Screening Emergency Department Patients for Carbon Monoxide Exposure.

Baseline COHb levels were done on patients presenting to an urban emergency department. The results were correlated with vital signs, gender, age, mode of transportation and smoking. A number of unsuspected cases of carbon monoxide toxicity were identified.

Academic Emergency Medicine Journal, May 2006, Vol 13, No. 5, Suppl. 1, p 442. [www.aemj.org](http://www.aemj.org)

## Helpful Web Links

[www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov): Consumer Product Safety Commission: Information on carbon monoxide poisoning and prevention, including the new warning label.

[www.ul.com](http://www.ul.com): Underwriters Laboratories, Inc. Information on carbon monoxide detectors.  
[www.cmhc.ca](http://www.cmhc.ca): Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. *About your House* CO Fact Sheet.

