

For more information

NYS Department of Health's
Environmental Health Helpline

800-458-1158
health.ny.gov

Poison Control Center

Upstate New York: 800-222-1222
New York City: 212-764-7667

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Carbon Monoxide

The Silent Killer



Important information from...

**Speaker of the Assembly
Carl E. Heastie**



Dear Friend,

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a deadly gas, made all the more dangerous because it is odorless, tasteless and colorless. Because the initial symptoms of CO poisoning mimic the flu, many victims are not even aware they are being exposed. In New York State, approximately 200 people are hospitalized annually because of accidental CO poisoning. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, hundreds of Americans die every year from unintentional CO poisoning and thousands more get sick.

This brochure contains important information about CO, as well as safety precautions you can take to reduce your risk of CO poisoning.

As always, please feel free to contact me if I can assist you further with this or any other matter.

Sincerely,



Carl E. Heastie
Speaker of the Assembly

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Amanda's Law requires that CO detectors be installed in all dwellings including single- and multiple-family homes, apartment buildings, hotels/motels, boarding houses, fraternity and sorority buildings, school dormitories, etc. The law was named after Amanda Hansen, a 16-year-old who died of CO poisoning from a leak in a defective boiler. Homes built before 2008 need at least one functioning CO detector on a dwelling's lowest level with a bedroom. Newer dwellings have more strict regulations.

Steven Nelson's Law requires that CO detectors be installed in all restaurants and other commercial establishments that have appliances, devices or systems that may emit carbon monoxide or that have an attached garage. This law was named after Steven Nelson, a restaurant manager who died of CO poisoning at a Long Island restaurant from a water heater flue pipe that malfunctioned in the basement of the establishment.



What is carbon monoxide and why is it dangerous?

Carbon monoxide is a toxic gas you can't see, smell or taste. When inhaled, it binds tightly to red blood cells in the lungs in place of oxygen. High concentrations can starve vital organs, like your brain and heart, of oxygen. All people and animals are at risk for carbon monoxide poisoning; the most likely to be affected are infants, seniors and people with chronic heart disease, anemia or respiratory problems.

Where does CO come from?

Burning fuel produces CO and most households contain several CO sources. These include:

- furnaces and portable generators
- space heaters and hot-water heaters
- gas stoves and dryers
- fireplaces and wood-burning stoves
- charcoal and barbecue grills
- lawn mowers and gas-powered tools
- automobiles and boats

CO can rise to dangerous levels when fuel-burning appliances are installed incorrectly, damaged or improperly vented.

What are the symptoms of CO poisoning?

Early symptoms of CO poisoning mimic the flu and include headache, fatigue, dizziness, weakness, nausea, confusion, disorientation and visual disturbances. At higher levels of CO poisoning, symptoms include irregular breathing, increased pulse, altered speech, coma, convulsions and death.

The following clues will help identify symptoms that could be the result of CO poisoning:

- Symptoms occur or get worse shortly after turning on a fuel-burning device (e.g., generator, vehicle, tool).
- More than one person in the home becomes sick at the same time (it usually takes several days for the flu to pass from person to person).
- Symptoms are brought on by being in a certain location and go away soon after leaving the area.

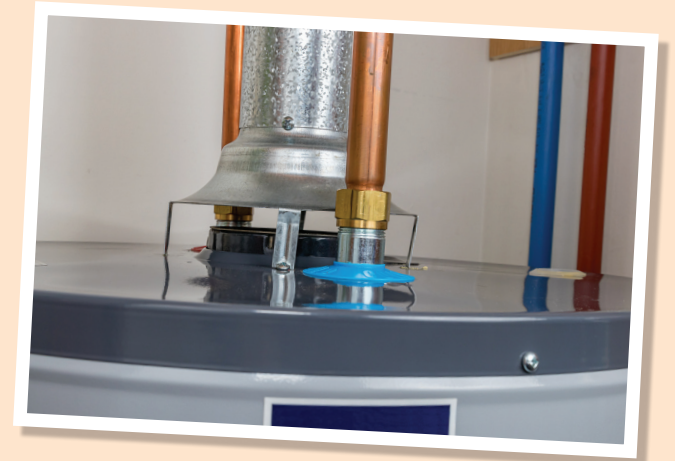
What do I do if I suspect CO poisoning?

- Get the person to fresh air and call 911 immediately. Report the incident to the fire department and gas company.
- If you can't get the person out of the house or if they are unconscious, open doors and windows and turn off any combustion appliances.
- Perform mouth-to-mouth resuscitation if the person is not breathing or if they are breathing irregularly.
- Keep the victim warm and watch their breathing closely.
- Do not give the person anything to eat or drink.



Need to get your heating equipment checked?

The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) provides services to eligible homeowners for cleaning and tuning, repair or replacement of heating equipment. Services include a carbon monoxide detector for the home if needed. Learn more at the HEAP website otda.ny.gov/programs/heap.



How can I reduce the risk of CO poisoning?

Proper installation, regular maintenance and adequate ventilation of fuel-burning appliances are key to avoiding CO poisoning. In addition, CO detectors, which sound an alarm, provide an early warning that CO levels are rising.

- Install a CO detector near bedrooms and on every level of the home.
- Have all fuel-burning equipment installed, converted and serviced by a qualified technician.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions when operating fuel-burning appliances.
- Make sure all sources of CO, including gas dryers, kerosene and gas heaters and wood and coal stoves, are properly vented and never run in an enclosed space.
- Never burn charcoal or use a barbecue grill indoors.
- Don't use your gas range or oven, or gas dryer, to warm a room.
- Check all vents and flues to make sure they are installed properly and have not become blocked or disconnected.
- Look for clogs, leaks and cracks in chimneys and vents.
- Have your furnace, gas appliances and fireplace inspected annually at the beginning of the cold-weather season.
- Fit your gas range with a hood that exhausts outside; use the fan or open a window when cooking.
- If the flame on your gas range is burning yellow or orange instead of blue, have it adjusted.
- Know the warning signs that an appliance may be malfunctioning:
 - rust or water streaks on a vent or chimney
 - a decreased hot-water supply
 - a furnace that is unable to heat the home or is running constantly
 - an unfamiliar or burning odor
 - soot, especially on appliances
 - a loose or missing furnace panel
 - increased moisture inside windows