



For Immediate Release

RISK FOR CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING INCREASES IN WINTER

SALT LAKE CITY - Carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning from autos, gas furnaces, and other appliances kills an estimated 500 people and sends more than 15,000 others to emergency rooms nationwide each year. In Utah, approximately 250 cases of CO poisoning and five deaths were reported in 2003, the latest numbers available. As winter approaches, and the risk for CO poisoning increases, the Utah Poison Control Center, Questar Corporation, and the Unified Fire Authority are reminding Utahns to know the symptoms of CO poisoning and take precautions to prevent it.

What is CO?

CO is an odorless, invisible gas produced when gasoline, natural gas, kerosene, and other fuels are not completely combusted during use. Automobile exhaust is the most common source of CO, but small gas engines, camp lanterns and stoves, charcoal grills, and gas ranges and furnaces also produce it. When appliances and furnaces are improperly adjusted and used in poorly ventilated areas, dangerous amounts of CO can build up in the blood, replacing the oxygen, and potentially cause asphyxiation.

Recognizing CO Poisoning Symptoms

Although everyone is susceptible to CO poisoning, unborn babies, infants, the elderly, and people with respiratory problems are particularly at risk. Because CO is invisible and odorless, it is important to know the symptoms of CO poisoning and to immediately seek medical help if those symptoms occur.

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The most common symptoms are:

- persistent, severe headaches and dizziness (usually affecting more than one person in an enclosed area).
- nausea, vomiting and fatigue.

- the disappearance of symptoms when individuals leave the structure.

If the presence of CO is suspected based on these symptoms, evacuate all persons from the structure and call the poison control center at 1-800-222-1222, or 911.

CO Prevention

People can avoid CO poisoning through simple prevention measures and common sense. For example, most fire-related CO poisoning can be prevented by the proper installation and maintenance of smoke detectors. Here are some other tips for preventing CO poisoning:

- Have your heating system, water heater, and any other gas-, oil-, or coal-burning appliances serviced by a qualified technician every year.

- Install a battery-operated, Underwriters Laboratory approved, CO detector on each level of your home. Check or replace the battery when you change the time on your clocks each spring and fall. Installing a CO monitor should never be a substitute for a professional inspection of home heating and cooking equipment. Owners of boats and recreational vehicles with propane stoves or heaters should install CO detectors.

- If your CO detector alarms continuously, evacuate your home and call 911 or your local gas company. If the alarm is only intermittent, change the batteries. If anyone has symptoms immediately call the poison control center at 800-222-1222 or 911.

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- Seek prompt medical attention if you suspect CO poisoning and are feeling dizzy, light-headed, or nauseated.
- Do not use a generator, charcoal grill, camp stove, or other gasoline- or charcoal-burning device inside your home, basement or garage or near a window.
- Do not run a car or truck inside a garage attached to your house, even if you leave the door open.
- Do not burn anything in a stove or fireplace that is not vented.
- Do not heat your house with a gas oven.

Knowledge is the key to preventing carbon monoxide poisoning. Anyone who thinks he or she has CO poisoning should call the poison control center at the above number or call 911.

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Oct. 10, 2005

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