



CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a gas you cannot see, taste or smell and is often called the “invisible killer.” It is created when fossil fuels, such as kerosene, gasoline, coal, natural gas, propane, methane or wood do not burn completely. CO poisoning can result from malfunctioning or improperly vented furnaces or other heating appliances, portable generators, water heaters, clothes dryers, or cars left running in garages. The Mayo Clinic explains that “carbon monoxide (CO) acts as a systematic asphyxiant by binding to hemoglobin with 200-250 times greater affinity than oxygen, forming carboxyhemoglobin (COHb). This reduces oxygen delivery to tissues (hypoxia), inhibits mitochondrial respiration, and causes cellular damage, primarily impacting high-oxygen-demand organs like the brain and heart.”

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning may include:

- Dull headache
- Weakness
- Dizziness
- Nausea or vomiting
- Shortness of breath
- Confusion
- Blurred vision
- Loss of consciousness

If you think you or someone you are with may have carbon monoxide poisoning, get into fresh air and seek emergency medical care.

The Tennessee State Fire Marshal’s Office (SMFO) urges Tennessee consumers to learn about the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning and take precautions in order to prevent tragedy.

- Make sure vents for the dryer, furnace, stove and fireplace are clear of snow and other debris.
- Use portable generators outdoors in well-ventilated areas away from the home.

- If you are using a portable generator, make sure you have battery-operated CO alarms or plug-in CO alarms with the battery backup in the home.
- Choose a CO alarm that has the label of a recognized testing laboratory. Install and maintain CO alarms inside your home to provide early warning of carbon monoxide. Install and maintain CO alarms outside each separate sleeping area on every level of the home, and in other locations as required by laws, codes or standards.
- Have fuel-burning heating equipment (fireplaces, furnaces, water heaters, wood stoves, coal stoves, space heaters, and portable heaters) and chimneys inspected by a professional every year. Open the damper for proper ventilation before using a fireplace.
- Never use an oven or stovetop to heat your home.
- Purchase heating and cooking equipment that has the label of a recognized testing laboratory from a reputable retailer.
- Vent the exhaust from fuel-burning equipment to the outside to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning. Keep the venting clear and unblocked.
- Use caution when working with solvents in a closed area. Methylene chloride, a solvent commonly found in paint and varnish removers, can break down (metabolize) into carbon monoxide when inhaled. Exposure to methylene chloride can cause carbon monoxide poisoning.

Remove vehicles from the garage right away after starting. Never run a vehicle or other fueled engine or motor in a garage, even if garage doors are open. Make sure the exhaust pipe of a running vehicle is not blocked with snow, ice or other materials.

The laws regarding the mandatory installation of carbon monoxide detectors have changed over the year and it is now required that homeowners install them in their homes. They are easily available for purchase from various retailers like Lowes or Amazon. The average cost of a 10-year detector is around \$20. Although the life expectancy of the detector ranges in years, the recommendation is to replace them every five years. Also, it is highly recommended that you replace the batteries every six months. It is usually best to change them when you change your clocks forward and back. In choosing a CO detector, **“Look for a statement on the package about the alarm's accuracy level.** If the CO alarm is UL Listed, then the accuracy statement will have been certified by UL, too. Plug-in

with Battery Backup: Easy to plug into any electrical socket, these alarms are powered primarily by your home's AC power.”

“KEEP SAFE BY BEING INFORMED AND PREPARED”

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