



Central Office: 505 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield, CT 06109 Phone (860) 721-2822 Fax (860) 721-2823
Berlin: 240 Kensington Road, Berlin, CT 06037 Phone (860) 828-7017 Fax (860) 828-9248
Newington: 131 Cedar Street, Newington, CT 06111 Phone (860) 665-8586 Fax (860) 665-8533
Rocky Hill: 761 Old Main Street, Rocky Hill, CT 06067 Phone (860) 258-2770 Fax (860) 258-2767
www.ccthd.org

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

‘Tis the Season for Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

With the holidays upon us, the heat is being turned on and we are spending more time with the ones we love in the warmth of our homes. As we prepare to venture into a season of colder weather, the Central Connecticut Health District (CCHD) is urging residents to keep in mind the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an invisible, odorless gas that can be fatal. The symptoms of CO mimic the flu, including headache, fatigue, dizziness, nausea, vomiting or loss of consciousness. The effects of CO poisoning can vary with age and overall health of the individual, as well as how long they are exposed to the toxic gas. If several members of a household experience these symptoms while at home and then feel better when they leave the home, it is a good indicator that there is a dangerous level of CO in the home. These issues are usually caused by malfunctioning furnaces, improperly placed portable generators and charcoal grills being used indoors.

According to the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH), CO detectors are especially important given the number of CO poisoning cases reported during the four major storms the State experiences in the past two years. For example, during and after the October snowstorm in 2011, there were 134 poisonings and five deaths caused by CO exposure. In an average year, there are approximately 100 CO poisonings and four deaths. Many of the affected people did not have CO detectors. In fact, a recent survey conducted by DPH showed that the number of CO detectors was only 67.7% in 2012, proving that while Connecticut is getting the word out, many homes are still without these life saving detectors.

To prevent CO poisoning, portable generators should be placed at least 20 feet from the home and should never be used in enclosed spaces such as porches, carports, garages or basements, even if the doors and windows are opened. Opening windows and doors will not be enough to release all of the built up CO levels and can still be hazardous.

CCHD recommends the following safety tips to ensure CO poisoning:

- Get out of the house **immediately** if you or your family has sudden and unexplained onset of symptoms of CO poisoning, including vomiting, dizziness, nausea, headache, fatigue or loss of consciousness.
- Install a carbon monoxide detector near all sleeping areas. Be sure to replace all batteries at least once a year and replace the detectors every five years.
- Have your heating systems, chimney flues, gas appliances and generators checked, cleaned and serviced every year, as needed, by qualified heating/appliance contractors
- Be sure to use gasoline-powered equipment outside and away from doors, windows or air intake vents
- Only use grills outdoors
- Never use portable generators, pressure washer machines or other gasoline-powered equipment (including tools) in your home, basement, garage, carport or other enclosed spaces. Always make sure that generators are at least 20 feet from your home.

For more information about CO poisoning, visit the CT DPH Environmental & Occupational Health Assessment Program at www.ct.gov/dph/co, or by calling 860-509-7742. The Connecticut Poison Control Center can be reached by calling 1-800-222-1222.

Further information about carbon monoxide or any other public health related issue can be directed to the Central Connecticut Health District, serving the towns of Berlin, Newington, Rocky Hill and Wethersfield, by calling 860-721-2822 or by visiting our website at www.ccthd.org.