

Carbon Monoxide Risk

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless gas that can cause sudden illness and death if inhaled. Every year, more than 400 people die in the U. S. from accidental carbon monoxide poisoning. When power has been out, the use of alternative sources of fuel or electricity for heating, cooling, or cooking can cause carbon monoxide to build up in a home, garage, or camper.

Prevent Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

- Never use generators, grills, camp stoves, or other gasoline, propane, natural gas, or charcoal-burning devices inside a home, garage, or camper—or even outside near an open window.
- Never use a charcoal grill, hibachi, lantern, or portable camping stove inside a home, tent, or camper.
- Never run a generator, pressure washer, or any gasoline-powered engine inside a basement, garage, or other enclosed structure, even if the doors or windows are open, unless the equipment is professionally installed and vented. Keep vents and flues free of debris, especially if winds are high. Flying debris can block ventilation lines.
- Never run a motor vehicle, generator, pressure washer, or any gasoline-powered engine outside an open window, door, or vent where exhaust can vent into an enclosed area.
- Never leave the motor running in a vehicle parked inside an enclosed or partially enclosed space, such as a garage.
- If conditions are too hot or too cold, seek shelter with friends or at a community shelter.
- Ensure that your home has at least one working carbon monoxide detector. Check the detector's batteries twice annually; at the same time smoke detector batteries are checked.

Signs of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Exposure to carbon monoxide can cause loss of consciousness and death. The most common symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, chest pain, and confusion. People who are exposed to high carbon monoxide levels while sleeping or after drinking alcohol can die from carbon monoxide poisoning before ever having symptoms. If carbon monoxide poisoning is suspected, consult a health care professional right away.