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CARBON MONOXIDE

THE HIDDEN DANGER

Facts you should know about carbon monoxide

Whether you heat your home with oil, natural gas, propane, coal or wood, your heating system can produce carbon monoxide (CO) if it is not working properly, or if it is inadequately vented. CO also is produced from internal combustion devices such as a car and small gasoline engines. Carbon monoxide is odorless, colorless and tasteless, but very toxic. Signs indicating the presence of carbon monoxide in the home include stuffy, stale or smelly air, very high humidity or soot coming from a fireplace or heating system.

What are the symptoms of CO poisoning?

The symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are often confused with those of influenza, and the highest incidence of poisoning occurs during flu season. Symptoms include headaches, dizziness, nausea, unclear thinking, shortness of breath, weakness, vision problems and loss of muscle control. High concentrations of carbon monoxide can lead to unconsciousness, brain damage or death. However, a victim may not experience ANY of these symptoms, or only one or a few symptoms. You should suspect the presence of carbon monoxide if symptoms tend to disappear when you leave your home.

What should you do if you suspect the presence of CO in your home?

If you suspect the presence of carbon monoxide:

- Open the windows and doors
- Call your local fire department, or 911, for emergency assistance.
- If carbon monoxide is detected, seek medical attention immediately.

How can you reduce the risk of CO poisoning in the home?

- "Tune up" your heating system using a licensed heating contractor, preferably before the heating season begins.
- Check your chimney or vent pipes for blockage. If a blockage exists, contact a professional chimney sweep immediately.
- Make sure your home is adequately ventilated, particularly if you have insulated your home, had major renovations done, or have enclosed your heating system.
- Clear snow and ice from around appliance and equipment vents.