

# Protect Your Family from Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

## Facts

- CO is a gas you can't see, taste or smell. CO is released when fuels like natural gas, oil, wood, kerosene or charcoal don't have enough oxygen to burn efficiently. This poisonous gas can escape into a home, car or garage and kill people.
- CO can accumulate inside the home from a variety of sources: - furnaces and water heaters - gas or kerosene space heaters - gas boilers - gas ranges and ovens - gas dryers - charcoal or gas grills - fireplaces and wood stoves - vehicles - yard equipment with gasoline-powered engines
- Exposure to low levels of CO can cause flu-like symptoms – nausea, dizziness, drowsiness, weakness, intense headaches and shortness of breath. Higher levels can result in unconsciousness or death.
- People most vulnerable to the effects of CO include pregnant women, the elderly, small children, people with lung problems or other chronic health conditions, and people engaging in strenuous physical activity.
- CO is most likely to accumulate during the winter months, when the heating system is in use and the home has been sealed and insulated against the cold.

## Safe Behavior

### To protect yourself and your family from CO poisoning:

- Install a UL-listed carbon monoxide alarm in your home that will sound when potentially dangerous levels of CO are present. All homes should have BOTH a CO alarm and a smoke/fire alarm. A smoke/fire alarm does not warn you when CO is present. CO alarms and smoke/fire alarms can be purchased at any retail stores, hardware stores and building supply stores.
- Have a qualified technician inspect your furnace and check all fuel-burning appliances in the fall. Make sure your furnace has an adequate air supply. Make sure your heating system and all fuel-burning appliances are adequately vented and properly maintained.
- When using a fireplace, wood stove or space heater, provide adequate ventilation.
- Portable propane camping equipment and gas barbecues are approved for outdoor use only. They should never be used inside cabins, tents, fish houses, recreational vehicles or boats. Read the labels on recreational appliances and follow the manufacturer's operating instructions.
- If your car is stuck in the snow, make sure that the exhaust (tail pipe) is cleared before starting the engine on your car. Be sure the exhaust is free of snow and periodically check if you need to use the engine for heat. Keep in mind the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning.
- During power outages, be particularly careful not to use gasoline engines or burn charcoal in enclosed spaces – including a garage, even if the door is open. Don't use gas stoves or ovens to heat living areas.