

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**STATEMENT FROM FLORIDA SECRETARY OF HEALTH ON
DANGERS OF CARBON MONOXIDE**

Florida Department of Health Secretary John O. Agwunobi M.D.: **“As Floridians keep warm indoors, they need to remain aware of the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning – a tragic occurrence which recently claimed the lives of two individuals in our state. An invisible, odorless, and tasteless gas, carbon monoxide (CO) is highly poisonous. CO is produced by household combustion appliances such as natural gas or oil-burning furnaces, water heaters, clothes dryers, space heaters, ranges or kerosene heaters, as well as fireplaces, wood stoves, automobile engines, gasoline or diesel generators and lawnmowers. Awareness is the key to protecting against CO poisoning. Depending on the level of exposure, CO may cause fatigue, weakness, chest pains for those with heart disease, shortness of breath upon exertion, nausea, vomiting, headaches, confusion, lack of coordination, impaired vision, loss of consciousness, and, in severe cases, death.”**

Agwunobi recommends the following precautions to help prevent carbon monoxide poisoning:

- Install a carbon monoxide alarm in your home if you have combustion appliances or an attached garage.
- Be sure all appliances are properly installed and used according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Have fireplace and combustion heating and ventilation systems, including chimneys, flues, and vents, professionally inspected every year.
- Don't burn charcoal inside a house, garage, vehicle, tent or fireplace.
- Don't use unvented combustion heaters in enclosed spaces, especially sleeping areas.
- Never leave an automobile running in a closed garage or in a garage attached to the house - even with the garage door open.
- While driving, keep the rear window or tailgate of a vehicle closed, as carbon monoxide from the exhaust can be pulled inside.
- If you suspect you are experiencing any symptoms of CO poisoning, open doors and windows, turn off gas appliances and go outside. In cases of severe CO poisoning, call the 911 emergency services or call the nearest Poison Information Center at 1-800-222-1222.
- For more information, contact the Florida Department of Health's Indoor Air Toxics Hotline at 800-543-8279 or visit the Department of Health website at www.doh.state.fl.us

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