



Charlie Crist
Governor

Ana M. Viamonte Ros, M.D., M.P.H.
State Surgeon General

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Contact: Office of Communications
(850) 245-4111

**THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH CAUTIONS AGAINST CARBON MONOXIDE
POISONING THIS WINTER**

TALLAHASSEE—The Florida Department of Health (DOH) urges Floridians to take precautions that can help prevent carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning during the colder winter months or during any situation involving a loss of power. As temperatures drop, the potential for CO poisonings and deaths rises.

“Carbon monoxide can be fatal if people are exposed to high levels, even for a short period of time,” said Dr. Lisa Conti, Director of the Division of Environmental Health. “Floridians who use indoor gas heaters and fireplaces should ensure the heaters exhaust to the outdoors, regularly check and maintain fuel burning appliances, have a working CO alarm in their homes and be aware of the signs of CO poisoning.”

Invisible, odorless and tasteless, CO is a highly poisonous gas produced by burning fuels such as gasoline, natural gas, kerosene, charcoal and wood. Inside a home, CO can come from a gas-fueled furnace, gas water heater, gas clothes dryer, gas ranges, kerosene space heaters, portable generators, gas or charcoal grills, fireplaces or wood stoves. The risk of illness or death increases with the level of CO in the air and the amount of time exposed. Dangerous CO levels can result when home appliances are not properly maintained or when used incorrectly.

Signs of carbon monoxide poisoning include fatigue, chest pain, impaired vision and coordination, headaches or dizziness, confusion or nausea. Anyone who suspects symptoms of CO poisoning should go outside immediately and seek prompt medical attention. If a person has collapsed or is not breathing, call 9-1-1 for emergency medical assistance immediately from a safer location (outside or from a neighbor's home).

Help prevent carbon monoxide poisoning by following these tips:

- Install and use fuel-burning appliances according to manufacturer instructions.
- Never use a gas stove or oven to heat your home.
- Have fuel-burning appliances inspected and serviced annually by a licensed contractor.
- Inspect exhaust ventilation systems every year, including chimneys, flues and vents.
- Never burn charcoal inside a house, garage, vehicle or tent, even in a fireplace.
- Avoid using unvented gas or kerosene heaters in enclosed spaces, especially sleeping areas.
- Never leave an automobile running in a garage, even with the garage door open.
- Do not leave the rear window or tailgate of a vehicle open while driving. CO from the exhaust can be pulled inside the car, van or camper.
- Install battery operated CO alarms or plug-in CO alarms with battery backup inside the house according to manufacturer's installation instructions or NFPA 720: Standard for the Installation of Carbon Monoxide (CO) Detection and Warning Equipment.



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- The CO alarm should meet the most recent UL 2034 standard, IAS 6-96 standard or the CSA 6.19.01 standard.
- Replace CO alarm batteries once a year and test alarms frequently.
- Replace CO alarms once every five years in accordance with recommendations by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.
- Never use a portable generator or a fuel-powered tool indoors, including in homes, garages, basements, crawl spaces, sheds and other enclosed or partially enclosed areas.
- Always place portable generators outdoors on a dry surface, away from doors, windows, vents and air conditioning equipment that could allow CO to enter the building.

For more information about suspected poisoning emergencies, call the Florida Poison Information Center at 1-800-222-1222.

DOH posted an educational video on carbon monoxide poisoning prevention courtesy of the California Air Resources Board at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t5rlyN6LuoU>. To learn more about indoor air pollution and public health in Florida, visit <http://www.myfloridaeh.com/community/indoor-air/> or call the Radon and Indoor Air program at 1-800-543-8279. DOH promotes, protects and improves the health of all people in Florida.

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