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TAKE PRECAUTIONS TO PREVENT CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

-The Florida Department of Health urges residents and visitors to know the signs of carbon monoxide poisoning as the winter months bring colder weather-

TALLAHASSEE – The Florida Department of Health (DOH) urges Floridians to take precautions to prevent carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning during the colder winter months because as temperatures drop, the potential for CO poisonings and deaths rise. Invisible, odorless, and tasteless, CO is a highly poisonous gas produced by burning fuels such as gasoline, natural gas, kerosene, charcoal and wood. 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.

“Carbon monoxide is dangerous and can be fatal if people and pets are exposed to high levels, even for short periods of time,” said Dr. Kendra Goff, State Toxicologist. “Floridians who use indoor gas heaters and fireplaces should ensure that heaters vent exhaust gasses to the outdoors, regularly check and maintain fuel burning appliances, and be aware of the signs of CO poisoning. Properly working CO alarms can save lives by alerting you to life threatening levels of carbon monoxide.”

The common signs and symptoms of CO poisoning include headache, nausea, lethargy (or fatigue), weakness, abdominal discomfort/pain, confusion and dizziness. Other signs and symptoms may include blurred vision, numbness and tingling, ataxia (loss or lack of muscular coordination), irritability, agitation, chest pain, shortness of breath, palpitations, seizures and loss of consciousness.

Anyone who suspects symptoms of CO poisoning should go outside the home or building without delay and seek prompt medical attention. If a person has collapsed or is not breathing, call 911 for emergency medical assistance immediately from a safer location such as outside or from a neighbor's home. Children, pregnant women and individuals with heart conditions are most vulnerable.

Use these tips to help prevent CO poisoning:

- Never use a gas stove or oven to heat the home.
- Never burn charcoal inside a house, garage, vehicle or tent, including in a fireplace.
- Avoid using unvented gas or kerosene heaters in enclosed spaces, especially sleeping areas.
- Install and use fuel-burning appliances according to manufacturer instructions.

- Inspect the exhaust system of each fuel burning appliance every year, including chimneys, flues and vents. Check for blockage, holes and disconnections.
- Have fuel-burning appliances inspected and serviced annually by a licensed contractor.
- 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.
- Never use a portable generator or a fuel-powered tool indoors or in other enclosed or partially enclosed areas.
- Always place portable generators outdoors on a dry surface far away from doors, windows, vents and air conditioning equipment that could allow CO to enter. Orient the generator so that it is placed with the exhaust port pointing away from the home.
- 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.
- Install only CO alarms that meet the UL 2034 or the CSA 6.19 standards.
- Replace CO alarm batteries once a year and test alarms frequently.
- Replace CO alarms every five years or as often as recommended by the alarm manufacturer.

For more information about suspected poisoning emergencies, call the Florida Poison Information Center at 1-800-222-1222. To learn more about indoor air pollution and public health in Florida, [visit www.doh.state.fl.us/Environment/community/indoor-air.htm](http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Environment/community/indoor-air.htm) or call the Radon and Indoor Air Program at 1-800-543-8279.

The mission of DOH is to protect and promote the health of all residents and visitors in the state through organized state and community efforts, including cooperative agreements with counties.

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