

News



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Connecticut residents urged to use safety precautions to prevent CO poisoning this winter

CDC reports numerous CO related deaths following Gulf Coast hurricanes

Hartford –With cold weather setting in, home heating fuel prices on the rise and the recent carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning of 51 people following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita resulting in five deaths, the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) reminds state residents who may be considering alternate heating sources – such as wood-burning stoves, gas fireplaces or kerosene heaters - to properly ventilate such devices in order to avoid CO poisoning.

“Proper ventilation is critical,” said DPH Commissioner J. Robert Galvin, M. D., M. P. H. “Carbon monoxide can kill you.” According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, between August 29 and September 24, all 51 CO poisoning cases in Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi were directly attributable to the use of portable gasoline-powered generators or tools without proper ventilation, either in the house, garage, carport, basement, under a deck, or in a shed.

CO gas is invisible and odorless, and its poisonous effects are difficult to diagnose because the symptoms mimic those of influenza: headache, fatigue, dizziness, nausea or vomiting, and loss of consciousness. However, if several household members experience these symptoms when they are home, but feel better when they are away from the home, there may be a CO problem.

“If you live in a home with a combustible heat source such as oil, gas or wood, and you or others in the home experience these symptoms, CO poisoning could be to blame,” Commissioner Galvin stated, noting that anyone suffering from these symptoms should discuss them with a physician immediately.

In addition, Commissioner Galvin remarked that portable gasoline powered generators have become popular items for use in the home. “Exhaust from such generators contains carbon monoxide. This is why they should never be used indoors or in enclosed spaces,” he stated, adding that a licensed electrician should be called in order to properly wire and connect home-use generators.

Finally, every home that burns oil, gas, wood, or coal should have a carbon monoxide detector that is in good, working order. If the alarm goes off, get out of the house immediately. Call your town’s fire department from a cell phone or neighbor’s house.

The Connecticut Department of Public Health offers some safety precautions to prevent CO poisoning when using gasoline generators and other gasoline-powered equipment. Keep these in mind, especially after storms and power outages.

Safety Precautions To Prevent CO Poisoning

- Never use portable generators, pressure washer engines, or other gasoline-powered equipment (including tools) inside your home, garage, carport, basement or other enclosed spaces.
- Have a working CO detector on each floor of your residence. Change the battery at least twice a year.
- Grilling apparatus, such as charcoal or gas grills, should be used exclusively outdoors. *Never use charcoal or gas grills inside your home, garage, carport, basement or other enclosed spaces.*
- Place gasoline-powered equipment outside and away from doors, windows, or air intakes.
- Opening windows and doors, and operating fans is not sufficient to prevent buildup of CO in a home.
- **Get out of the house and seek medical help immediately if you or a family member has symptoms of CO poisoning. Symptoms include headache, fatigue, dizziness, nausea or vomiting, and loss of consciousness.**
- **Persons sick with CO poisoning should contact 9-1-1 and the Connecticut Poison Control Center at the University of Connecticut Health Center in Farmington at 1-800-222-1222.**

For more information on carbon monoxide poisoning and prevention, please call:
DPH Environmental & Occupational Health Assessment Program: 860-509-7742

For information about installing portable generators, call your utility company:

- **CL&P** at: 1-800-286-2000 (947-2000 in the Hartford or Meriden calling area.)
- **United Illuminating:** 1-800-7-CALL UI (1-800-722-5584) or in the New Haven area at 499-3333

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