



## Carbon monoxide poisonings rise when temperatures drop in Minnesota

### Properly working home heating devices and carbon monoxide alarms save lives

11.6.18 As temperatures fall in Minnesota, the number of people who become seriously ill from carbon monoxide poisoning goes up, according to data from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH). Illness and deaths from CO poisoning can be prevented when people take certain steps to prepare for heating season, say state health and public safety officials.

Emergency room visits and hospitalizations from [carbon monoxide \(CO\) poisoning](#) are highest between November and February, when the use of fuel-burning heat sources increases people's risk, according to information from the Minnesota Public Health Tracking Program at MDH. The number of emergency room visits for carbon monoxide poisoning more than doubles between September and November and reaches a high in February, according to data from 2011 through 2015.

"Just as we turn back our clocks in the fall or put on the storm windows, part of preparing our homes for winter should be to make sure heat sources and carbon monoxide alarms are in good working order," said Dan Tranter, supervisor of the Indoor Air program for MDH. "When the temperature drops, we begin to see an uptick in carbon monoxide poisonings. A few simple steps can prevent many of them."

To protect yourself and your family from carbon monoxide, follow these safety tips:

- **Make sure you have working carbon monoxide alarms.** To detect potentially deadly conditions, CO alarms should be installed and regularly maintained in all households. In Minnesota, state law requires CO alarms in all single and multi-family Minnesota residences within 10 feet of each room used for sleeping. Replace your alarms every five years or according to manufacturer's instructions.
- **Have your furnace or wood-burning stove inspected annually.** Hire a professional to make sure it is working properly and vents properly outside the home.
- **Never run a gasoline or propane heater or a grill (gas or charcoal) inside your home or in garage.** Properly vent and maintain all fuel burning appliances. Any heating system that burns fuel produces carbon monoxide. Use battery-powered alarms where you have fuel burning devices but no electric outlets, such as tents, cabins, RVs, and boats with enclosed cabins.
- **Generators should be run at a safe distance (at least 20 feet) from the home.** Never run a generator in the home or garage, or right next to windows or doors.
- **Never run a car in an enclosed space.** Back your car into the driveway when you want to idle it.
- At high levels, carbon monoxide can cause death within minutes. Symptoms of overexposure to carbon monoxide include headache, fatigue, dizziness, shortness of breath, nausea, and confusion. If you suspect you may be experiencing carbon

monoxide poisoning, or your detector sounds an alarm, head outside immediately for fresh air and call 911.

Visit the [Minnesota Public Health Data Access portal](#) for more information about carbon monoxide poisoning emergency room visits, hospitalizations and deaths. Download a printable version of the brochure: [Carbon Monoxide: Preventing carbon monoxide poisoning in your home \(PDF\)](#).

Minimize the risks of winter during Winter Hazard Awareness Week, Nov. 5-9. Learn more at the Minnesota Department of Public Safety's [Winter Hazard Awareness Week](#) webpage.

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