

Senseless Poisoning From Carbon Monoxide

This information is from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC).

What is carbon monoxide?

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a toxic gas that is produced when fuel is burned with incomplete combustion. CO is a colorless, odorless, deadly gas. Because you can't see, taste or smell it, carbon monoxide can kill you before you know it's there.

Who is at risk for carbon monoxide poisoning?

Everyone is at risk for CO poisoning. Medical experts believe, however, that some individuals are more vulnerable to poisoning such as unborn babies, infants, children, senior citizens and people with heart or lung problems.

CO claims at least 250 lives each year from home fuel-burning appliances. Another 5,000 people are treated in hospital emergency rooms each year for CO poisoning.

CPSC Chairman Ann Brown said, "The tragedy for all victims of carbon monoxide poisoning is that their deaths are entirely preventable. CPSC has worked with industry to recall dangerous CO-producing products from the market, to develop standards for products to protect against CO poisoning, and to launch an extensive public awareness campaign to warn about the hidden dangers of CO. But, everyone must do their part to prevent this type of tragedy."

Why is carbon monoxide so dangerous?

When CO is present in the air, it rapidly accumulates in the blood forming a toxic compound known as carboxyhemoglobin (COHb.) This compound causes symptoms similar to the flu, such as headaches, fatigue, nausea, dizzy spells, confusion, and irritability.

CPSC, says the best line of defense against CO is to have your home heating fuel-burning appliances inspected each year, preferably before the start of the home heating season, to make sure they're in good working order. CPSC also urges consumers to purchase and install CO detectors that meet the Underwriters Laboratories standard 2034. These detectors will sound an alarm before the level of CO in your home would become dangerous.

You can find this article and more information from Healthtouch Online at <http://www.healthtouch.com> or at <http://www.hsc.wvu.edu/charleston/wvpc> which is the website of the West Virginia Poison Center.

If in spite of all precautions, there is a poisoning accident:

Call the West Virginia Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222