



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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DOH WARNS OF THE DANGERS OF CARBON MONOXIDE EXPOSURE DURING WINTER

TALLAHASSEE – As Floridians try to keep warm indoors this winter, we want to assure their safety by making them aware of the risks and dangers associated with carbon monoxide (CO) exposure and poisoning, warned officials at the Florida Department of Health (DOH).

“Carbon Monoxide can be fatal if the exposure is severe enough,” said DOH Secretary M. Rony François, M.D., M.S.P.H., Ph.D. “Indoor gas heaters and fire places may result in those high exposures, and Floridians should monitor themselves as well as their children when using fuel-operated appliances.”

Invisible, odorless and tasteless, carbon monoxide (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. At low concentrations, CO causes fatigue in healthy people and chest pains for those with heart disease. At higher concentrations, CO inhalation causes impaired vision and coordination, headaches, dizziness, confusion, nausea and death. The more CO in the air and the longer a person is exposed, the greater the risk of illness or death. Dangerous CO levels arise when home appliances are used incorrectly or are poorly maintained.

Here are some very important DOH precautions to help prevent CO poisoning:

- Be sure all combustion appliances are installed and used according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Have the heating system inspected annually.
- Have exhaust ventilation systems, including chimneys, flues and vents, checked every year.
- NEVER burn charcoal inside a house, garage, vehicle or tent – not even in a fireplace.
- Avoid using unvented gas or kerosene heaters in enclosed spaces, especially sleeping areas.
- Never leave an automobile running in a closed garage or in a garage attached to the house – even with the garage door open.
- Don't 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.
- If you use any of the above appliances, install CO alarms in your home. Obtain battery-operated CO alarms or plug-in CO alarms with battery backup according to manufacturer's installation instructions. The CO alarm should be certified to the requirements of the latest safety standards for CO alarms (UL 2034, IAS 6-96, CSA 6.19.01).
- Replace CO alarm batteries once a year and test alarms frequently.
- NEVER use a portable generator indoors, including in homes, garages, basements, crawl spaces, sheds and other enclosed or partially enclosed areas.
- ALWAYS locate portable generators outdoors on a dry surface, away from doors, windows, vents and air conditioning equipment that could allow CO to come indoors.

Anyone who suspects symptoms of CO poisoning should open doors and windows, turn off gas appliances and go outside. If you have a poisoning emergency, call your nearest Florida Poison Information Center at 1-800-222-1222. If the victim has collapsed or is not breathing, call 911 immediately.

For additional information about indoor air quality call the Florida Department of Health at 1-800-543-8279 or go to www.doh.state.fl.us and select “indoor air quality” from the subject list.



Jeb Bush
Governor

M. Rony François, M.D., M.S.P.H., Ph.D.
Secretary

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