

# A Moment of Self-Reliant Wisdom

Topic: **Carbon Monoxide - The Silent Killer**

**Learning objective:** Family will understand the danger of carbon monoxide, what it is, how it kills and how to protect your home or your disaster housing, from its deadly effects.



Particularly in those times when we are disrupted from our normal home routines or we are in second home or camping or negligent of our attention to maintenance of stoves and furnaces and or the by-products of fire, carbon monoxide may be generated to levels of danger without warning. However, simple awareness, proper maintenance, and monitoring of the air can keep the family safe and breathing fresh. The family preparing for the unexpected makes sense.



**Every home or living space should have a working CO detector for protection. The early alarm allows you to take actions before it 's too late.**



**Carbon monoxide (CO)** is an odorless, poisonous & flammable gas and a by-product of open flame and burning.

- Carbon monoxide is created by malfunctioning or poorly maintained gas, oil or wood fired heating and cooking equipment
- Additionally, carbon monoxide is given off by car & truck exhaust and is dangerous if allowed to build-up in any enclosed space.

## **Carbon monoxide poisoning**

- Persons who are poisoned by CO often become sick and confused before they recognize the danger.
- Persons exposed to high levels of CO may be unable to call for help or even get out of the space before they become unconscious. In extreme cases, death may result.
- Symptoms of slow CO poisoning include flu-like illness and throbbing headaches.
- Other signs of CO include stale, stuffy air, exhaust fumes or burning odor or other unfamiliar smells.
- Also, if there is any malfunction with the furnace, heating, cooking appliances or clothes-drying equipment or if chimney flues are obstructed/blocked, these may be clues that there is a CO problem.

## **for preventing carbon monoxide poisoning**

- Install at least one carbon monoxide detector, connected to a monitoring center that operates 24/7, on every level of your home and near sleeping areas. Constant monitoring helps keep you safe from poisonous CO gas that cause fatigue, dizziness, unconsciousness and possibly death if undetected.
- **Never** use portable electric generators, camp stoves, charcoal grill or similar devices inside your home, garage, and basement or in any confined space that can allow carbon monoxide to collect.
- Before every heating season, have your chimney, wood stoves, fireplace inspected and cleaned if necessary.
- Whenever a portable heater is in use supervise children and pets and **Never** leave the space heater on when unattended or sleeping.



Carbon Monoxide is an odorless, colorless, tasteless gas that is produced in dangerous amounts when fossil fuels do not burn properly. You cannot determine if carbon monoxide is present except by the alarm of a working carbon monoxide alarm or by special testing equipment.

Continued Page 2

- **Never** run your car engine for more than a few minutes in a garage or enclosed area, even if the door to the outside is open because fumes can still build quickly and can spread to your living space.
- Look for clues that home appliance may be malfunctioning or emitting toxic gas. Common indicators include: decreased hot water supply, soot on appliances and vents, increased moisture inside windows and finances unable to heat properly.

**If your CO alarm sounds,** it may indicate the presents of CO in your home. You must not ignore it!

- Call the Fire Department by dialing 9.1.1.
- Immediately ventilate the space and move outside to fresh air.
- Check that all persons are accounted for.
- Do not reenter the building or space.
- For more information on the dangers of carbon monoxide or the use of CO detectors contact your local fire department.



In time of disaster, firefighters, licensed plumbers heating contractors or appliance repair technicians may not be available to monitor, detect or repair equipment or appliances that produce carbon monoxide. It is in these times that you must be very attentive and careful that CO producing equipment or appliances is maintained to the best of your ability. Use of propane heaters or stoves, use of fireplace or fuel heaters, even use of electrical generators or fuel driven fans can be deadly if not kept down wind or maintained away from the shelter or enclosure. Awareness, common sense and good judgment are everything to your survival in times of turmoil and disorder. Family preparation for the unexpected makes sense.

**IF CARBON MONOXIDE HAS BEEN FOUND IN HOME OR LIVING SPACE OR YOUR DETECTOR HAS SOUNDED:**

- Your carbon monoxide (CO) detector is designed to sound an alarm before there is an immediate threat to life. A carbon monoxide detector measures exposure over time. It sounds an alarm if CO levels are extremely high over a short period of time or if carbon monoxide reaches a certain minimum over a long time. CO levels in excess of 10 parts-per-million
- (PPM) exceed the Environmental Protection Agency's standard for homes or living space.
- If firefighters have determined that there is less than 10 ppm of CO in your home, you should reset your detector. It may be that this was a false alarm or that your detector has malfunctioned and should be replaced. It could also be that the house was aired out before firefighters arrived and the CO levels were reduced. If your detector alarms again after the above was accomplished, call 9.1.1 right away.
- If firefighters have determined that there is between 10 to 100 ppm of CO in your home, you should leave your home until the problem can be corrected. This is a dangerous situation. It will not be safe until a licensed plumber; heating contractor or appliance repair technician can locate and correct the problem. A chimney sweep may be necessary to clear obstructions from flues or chimney.
- If firefighters have determined that carbon monoxide is in excess of
- 100 ppm is in your home; you should not stay in the home. **This level of CO is deadly.** It will not be safe until a licensed contractor or repairperson can correct the problem.
- Some persons are more sensitive to carbon monoxide than others, including people with heart or lung disease, infants, unborn babies, pregnant mothers or senior citizens. These people may become sick or even die at lower levels of

carbon monoxide. Extra care should be taken if these persons are present in the home or disaster living space.

**Neighbors Helping Neighbors - Know Your Neighborhood!**