

COLD WEATHER INCREASES RISK OF CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

Properly Maintained and Working Home Heating Devices and Carbon Monoxide Detectors Save Lives

Cudahy—The National Weather Service predicts that this could be the coldest November on record for parts of Wisconsin. That means furnaces, fireplaces, and other heating equipment will be getting a work out, and the Cudahy Health Department wants to remind residents to take action to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.

“As soon as colder weather arrives, we begin to see more emergency room visits due to carbon monoxide poisoning,” said Katie Gajeski, Cudahy Health Officer. “To prepare for winter weather, Wisconsin residents should ensure that their source of heat and their carbon monoxide detectors are in good working order.”

On average, carbon monoxide poisoning sends about 450 people per year to the emergency room in Wisconsin, according to the Wisconsin Environmental Public Health Tracking Program. These trips to the ER for carbon monoxide poisoning are preventable when people are prepared.

This advice also applies to the thousands of deer hunters who soon may be camping in cabins, recreational vehicles, or in tents.

“First, gasoline or propane heaters should never be used in a home, cabin, tent, recreational vehicle, or anywhere without ventilation,” Gajeski stated. “Grills, be they gas or charcoal, should NEVER be used indoors as a heating source.” While carbon monoxide detectors are required to be installed in residences in Wisconsin, Gajeski also encourages hunters and other campers to invest in a battery-powered CO detector for use in cabins, tents, RVs, or wherever they may be camping.

Other safety tips to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning:

- **Make sure you have working carbon monoxide detectors.** All homes and duplexes in Wisconsin are required to have detectors on every level, including the basement, but not the attic or storage areas. Detectors can be purchased at most hardware stores.
- **Have your furnace or wood-burning stove inspected annually.** Hire a professional to make sure it is functionally sound and vents properly outside the home.
- **Never run a car in an enclosed space.** If a vehicle is running, you must have a door open to the outside.
- **Generators should be run a safe distance from the home.** Never run a generator in the home or garage, or right next to windows or doors.

At high levels, carbon monoxide can cause death within minutes. Symptoms of overexposure to carbon monoxide include headaches, 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.

For more information about carbon monoxide, visit:

<http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/epht/CO/index.htm>

To view the carbon monoxide detector requirements for Wisconsin, visit:

https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin_code/sps/safety_and_buildings_and_environment/326_360/328.pdf

To learn more about properly installing a carbon monoxide detector, visit:

<http://dsps.wi.gov/Documents/Industry%20Services/Forms/Fire%20Prevention/Publications/SB-FormFirePrevCOAlarms10882.pdf>

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