

Important phone numbers

LOCAL GAS COMPANIES

PSEG LONG ISLAND
1-800-436-7734

NATIONAL GRID (LI)
1-800-490-0045

For more information

**New York State
Department of Health
Center for Environmental
Health Information Line**
800-458-1158
health.ny.gov

Poison Control Center
800-222-1222

Updated 5/14

Carbon Monoxide



The Silent Killer

Important information from...

**Assemblyman
Tom McKevitt**

assembly.state.ny.us

From the desk of...

**Assemblyman
Tom McKevitt**
assembly.state.ny.us



Dear Friend,

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a deadly gas, made all the more dangerous because it is odorless, tasteless and colorless. Because the initial symptoms of CO poisoning mimic the flu, many victims are not even aware they are being exposed. In New York State, approximately 200 people are hospitalized annually because of accidental CO poisoning. Nationwide, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, hundreds of Americans die every year from unintentional CO poisoning and thousands more get sick.

This brochure contains information about CO, as well as safety precautions you can take to reduce your risk of CO poisoning.

As always, please feel free to contact me if I can be of any assistance in this or any other matter.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Tom McKevitt in black ink.

Tom McKevitt
Member of Assembly

District Office

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East Meadow, NY 11554
516-228-4960

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Albany, NY 12248
518-455-5341

Email

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Q ■ Where does carbon monoxide come from?

Burning fuel produces CO and most households contain several CO sources. These include:

- furnaces and portable generators
- space heaters and hot-water heaters
- gas stoves and clothes dryers
- fireplaces and woodburning stoves
- charcoal and barbecue grills
- lawn mowers and fuel-powered tools
- automobiles and boats

CO can rise to dangerous levels when fuel-burning appliances are installed incorrectly, damaged or improperly vented.

Q ■ Why is CO dangerous?

Like oxygen from the air we breathe, CO binds to red blood cells in the lungs. However, CO binds 240 times more tightly than oxygen. Thus, CO can displace oxygen. The brain and heart are particularly sensitive to being deprived of oxygen. All people and animals are at risk for carbon monoxide poisoning, but unborn babies, infants and people with chronic heart disease, anemia or respiratory problems are more susceptible to its effects.

Q ■ What are the symptoms of CO poisoning?

Early symptoms of CO poisoning mimic the flu and include headache, fatigue, dizziness, weakness, nausea, confusion, disorientation and visual disturbances. At higher levels of CO poisoning, symptoms include irregular breathing, increased pulse, altered speech, coma, convulsions and death.

The following clues will help identify symptoms that could be the result of CO poisoning:

- Symptoms occur or get worse shortly after turning on a fuel-burning device (e.g., generator, vehicle, tool).
- More than one person in the home becomes sick at the same time (it usually takes several days for the flu to pass from person to person).
- Symptoms are brought on by being in a certain location and go away soon after leaving the area.

Q ■ How can I prevent CO poisoning?

Proper installation, regular maintenance and adequate ventilation of fuel-burning appliances are key to avoiding CO poisoning. In addition, CO detectors, which sound an alarm, provide an early warning that CO levels are rising.

Q ■ What do I do if I suspect CO poisoning?

- Get the person to fresh air and call 911 immediately. Report the incident to the fire department and gas company.
- If you can't get the person out of the house or if they are unconscious, open doors and windows and turn off any combustion appliances.
- Perform mouth-to-mouth resuscitation if the person is not breathing or if he or she is breathing irregularly.
- Keep the victim warm and watch his or her breathing closely.
- Do not give the person anything to eat or drink.

Reduce your family's risk of carbon monoxide poisoning

- Have all fuel-burning equipment installed, converted and serviced by a qualified technician.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions when operating fuel-burning appliances.
- Make sure all sources of CO, including gas dryers, kerosene and gas heaters and wood and coal stoves, are properly vented and never run in an enclosed space.
- Check all vents and flues to make sure they are installed properly and have not become blocked or disconnected.
- Look for clogs, leaks and cracks in chimneys and vents.
- Have your furnace, gas appliances and fireplace inspected annually at the beginning of the cold-weather season.
- Install a CO detector near bedrooms and on every level of the home.
- Know the warning signs that an appliance may be malfunctioning:
 - rust or water streaks on vent/chimney
 - decreased hot-water supply
 - furnace unable to heat house or is running constantly
 - unfamiliar or burning odor
 - soot, especially on appliances
 - loose or missing furnace panel
 - increased moisture inside of windows
- Fit your gas range with a hood that exhausts outside; use the fan or open a window when cooking.
- If the flame on your gas range is burning yellow or orange instead of blue, have it adjusted.
- Don't use your gas range or oven, or gas dryer, to warm a room.
- Never burn charcoal or use a barbecue grill indoors.

Source: NYS Department of Health, Center for Environmental Health

Amanda's Law requires that CO detectors be installed in all dwellings. The law was named after 16-year-old Amanda Hansen who died of CO poisoning from a leak in a defective boiler. Homes built before 2008 need at least one functioning CO detector on a dwelling's lowest level with a bedroom. Newer dwellings have more strict regulations. Fire officials or building and code inspectors can't demand entrance to your home. However, home sales and home appraisals usually can't occur without a code inspection. For information about regulations, log on to: dos.ny.gov/DCEA/ or dos.ny.gov and type "carbon monoxide" in the search box. Log on to: health.ny.gov for information about CO.