

Gwinnett County

Department of Fire and Emergency Services



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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PREVENTING CARBON MONOXIDE EMERGENCIES

LAWRENCEVILLE – (January 5, 2010 at 2:36 p.m.) Carbon Monoxide (CO) has been described as the silent killer. It is a colorless, odorless, and tasteless gas that is hard to detect. CO can cause illness or possibly death before you know it's there. When inhaled CO bonds with the hemoglobin in the blood stream; displacing needed oxygen to the body. The Gwinnett County Department of Fire and Emergency Services suggest installing CO detectors on every level of the home, especially near the bedrooms.

Carbon Monoxide is a by-product of combustion. It comes from incomplete combustion of gas or oil fired appliances such as furnaces, dryers, wood-burning stoves, fireplaces, and car engines. A high percentage of carbon monoxide poisonings are from home heating systems that are not properly installed or maintained. Firefighters suggest having all home heating appliances inspected and serviced annually by a certified technician. This important task should be done long before the temperatures outside begin to drop.

Symptoms of CO poisoning are often mistaken for those accompanying the flu. The difference is that these symptoms will go away after leaving the home (CO source) for a period of time. Symptoms include headache, nausea, confusion, dizzy spells, and fatigue. If you feel the effects of CO poisoning, go outside to fresh air immediately. Seek medical attention if you experience any of the signs and symptoms of CO poisoning. Remember to call the Fire Department (9-1-1) to report a carbon monoxide leak as well as any exposure symptoms. Leave the house closed up and the appliances turned on. This will help firefighters determine the source of the leak. Never ignore an alarming CO detector. Operate the reset feature (reset button) if provided on the device. If the alarm continues to sound, evacuate immediately and call for help.

The following are tips to avoid a Carbon Monoxide poisoning:

- Make sure that all home heating appliances are installed according to manufacture's instructions. Appliances should be installed by a qualified professional. When purchasing new heating and cooking equipment, select products tested and labeled by an independent testing laboratory.

“SERVICE EXCELLENCE”

- Have all home heating appliances (*space heaters, fireplaces, furnace, and hot water heaters*) serviced annually by a certified technician. This should be done before temperatures outside start to drop.
- Install a CO detector in the hallway near the bedrooms and on every level of the home. Make sure that everyone in the household knows the sound of the CO detector and the smoke detector. Test and maintain CO detectors based on the manufacturer's instructions.
- Never burn charcoal inside a house or other enclosed area such as a garage or tent.
- Never use portable fuel-burning camping equipment inside a house, garage, vehicle, or tent.
- Never use gas appliances such as ranges, ovens, or clothes dryers to heat your home.
- Never use gasoline-powered tools and engines (such as generators) indoors. Generators should be placed out doors away from the structure in a well ventilated area.
- If you have to warm a vehicle, remove it from the garage immediately after starting it. Make sure that the exhaust pipe is not obstructed.
- When using the fireplace, remember to open the flue for adequate ventilation.