

# News



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## **With Cold Weather Approaching, DPH Warns Residents of Carbon Monoxide Danger**

*Improper use of portable generators, charcoal grills lead to hospitalizations and deaths each year*

**Hartford** – With cold weather approaching, the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) reminds residents of the dangers of carbon monoxide (CO) and encourages residents to have their heating systems serviced and carbon monoxide detectors installed in their homes. DPH also warns against the improper use of portable generators during power outages.

“Every winter in Connecticut, hundreds of residents are taken to the emergency department and some are hospitalized and even die due to CO poisoning resulting from malfunctioning furnaces, improperly placed portable generators and indoor use of charcoal grills,” stated DPH Epidemiologist Brian Toal. “Taking preventive measures such as having your furnace serviced annually, installing a CO detector near all sleeping areas, replacing the batteries annually, and placing portable generators well away from the house, will prevent CO poisonings.”

After Tropical Storm Irene and a rare October snowstorm left much of the state without electricity last year, Connecticut saw one of the largest outbreaks of carbon monoxide poisonings in the nation. DPH collected 143 laboratory reports of CO poisoning, including five deaths, in the 12 days after the October snowstorm. Only 35% of the CO poisoning cases interviewed after last year’s October snowstorm reported having a CO detector in their home. CO is an invisible, odorless gas that can be fatal. Often times, CO detectors are the only way to know that the deadly gas is present. DPH recommends that residents install CO detectors near all sleeping areas in their home to alert them of the presence of CO.

To prevent CO poisoning, portable generators should be placed at least 20 feet from the home and should never be used in enclosed spaces such as porches, carports, garages and basements, even with open windows and doors. Opening windows and doors, and using fans, is not sufficient to prevent the build-up of deadly levels of carbon monoxide.

The symptoms of CO poisoning mimic those of the flu, including headache, fatigue, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, or loss of consciousness. If several members of a household experience these symptoms when they are home, but feel better when they are away from the home, there may be a CO problem.

DPH offers the following safety tips to prevent CO poisoning:

- Install a carbon monoxide detector near sleeping areas. Install new batteries at least once a year and replace detectors every five years as the sensors degrade.
- Have your heating systems, chimney flues, gas appliances and generators checked every year, and cleaned and serviced as needed by qualified heating/appliance contractors.
- Never use portable generators, pressure washer engines, or other gasoline-powered equipment (including tools) inside your home, garage, carport, basement or other enclosed spaces. Be sure to place portable generators at least 20 feet from your home.
- Use gasoline-powered equipment outside and away from doors, windows or air intake vents.
- Use grilling apparatus such as charcoal or gas grills outdoors only.
- Opening windows and doors, and operating fans is not sufficient to prevent buildup of CO in a home.
- Get out of the house and seek medical help immediately if you or a family member has unexplained/sudden onset of symptoms of CO poisoning. Symptoms include headache, fatigue, dizziness, nausea or vomiting, and loss of consciousness.
- Call **911** from a cell phone or neighbor's home and the Connecticut Poison Control Center at **1-800-222-1222**.

For more information on carbon monoxide poisoning and prevention:

- CT DPH Environmental & Occupational Health Assessment Program  
[www.ct.gov/dph/co](http://www.ct.gov/dph/co) 860-509-7742
- Connecticut Poison Control Center  
<http://poisoncontrol.uhc.edu> 800-222-1222
- Consumer Product Safety Commission <http://www.cpsc.gov>

For more information on carbon monoxide detectors:

- Underwriters Laboratories, Inc. [www.ul.com](http://www.ul.com)

For statistical information:

- <http://dph.ehpt.ct.gov/HealthEffects/CarbonMonoxidePoisoningHome/Pages/default.aspx>

*The Connecticut Department of Public Health is the state's leader in public health policy and advocacy with a mission to protect and promote the health and safety of the people of our state. To contact the department, please visit its website at [www.ct.gov/dph](http://www.ct.gov/dph) or call (860) 509-7270.*

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