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Hidden Warning Signs for Carbon Monoxide Leaks

Chances are good you have multiple gas-burning appliances in your home. Stoves, furnaces, dryers and generators can all emit carbon monoxide. This is why carbon monoxide detectors in numerous areas of your home are critical. Make sure you have these devices correctly installed throughout your home.

Approximately 400 Americans die each year from unintentional carbon monoxide poisoning not related to fires. Carbon monoxide poisoning typically causes symptoms of headache, dizziness, nausea, or shortness of breath. Carbon monoxide leaks are more prominent in winter, around the time of cold and flu season. This is also when most of us are turning the heat back on for the first time in a while. And at the same time we are less likely to have windows and doors open, so there is less ventilation and clean air.

Following are three warning signs that you may have a carbon monoxide problem in your home:

ONE: Your Alarm

The most obvious sign is that your carbon monoxide detector alarm is going off. Don't ignore any of those annoying beeps or noises coming from your detector. Make sure you

replace the batteries to rule that out as the cause. If the noises continue after new batteries are installed, vacate your home and contact an expert. A qualified HVAC professional should be able to diagnose a carbon monoxide leak.

TWO: Your Pet(s)

Pets will often exhibit the first signs of carbon monoxide poisoning and its effects. Think of the proverbial canary in the coal mine. If your pet suddenly seems strangely lethargic or begins to display other unusual behaviors, it may be time to call in an expert to check your carbon monoxide levels. (And then check in with a vet--better safe than sorry.)

THREE: Viral Symptoms

Carbon monoxide poisoning often resembles the symptoms experienced when you have a cold. Because both colds and carbon monoxide poisoning are more common in winter this can be confusing. Pay attention to how you feel when you leave home....if you feel better within a short time, poisoning could well be the cause. Also pay attention to how other family members are feeling and if their symptoms also magically improve upon leaving home.

Other experts to call besides your HVAC company are your utility company, fire department, or 911.

January Calendar

January 1 - New Year's Day

January 19 - Martin Luther King Day

January is National Hobby Month

Homeowner Tips



Best Way to Safely Clean a Computer Screen

- 1) Shut down the device and unplug it.
- 2) Use a clean microfiber cloth.
- 3) If it's just dusty, wipe the screen in gentle, circular motions.
- 4) To remove smudges dampen your cloth with distilled water, rubbing alcohol or ammonia-free windex before wiping screen; never spray liquid directly on the screen.
- 5) Complete cleaning by drying with another clean microfiber cloth.

Entertaining in the Dead of Winter: 8 Fun Ideas

The month of January can feel bleak after all the busy-ness of the winter holidays. And the promise of spring is still miles away. Don't let those long, dark, cold days of winter bring you down. These 8 entertaining and fun ideas are sure to brighten your winter days:

#1: Plan a Movie Night: Provide cozy blankets and seasonal snacks (like caramel popcorn).

#2: Fondue Party: Include cheese and chocolate options with bread, fruits, and veggies for dipping.

#3: Irish Potluck: Dishes include corned beef and cabbage, shepherds pie and soda bread, among other decidedly Irish dishes.

#4: Host a Puzzle Party: Set up tables with puzzles of varying difficulty and serve easy snacks.

#5: Prepare for Valentine's Day: Host a handmade Valentine's Card party and have each guest bring something to contribute.

#6: Crochet Party: Host a "learn to crochet a scarf" party. They're easy and fun to make!

#7: Throw a Super Bowl Party! And take bets on who will win.

#8: Bucket List Party: Have each guest bring their ideas, with pictures and a description, on things they've always wanted to do. For many, this activity alone will bring them closer to their bucket-list goal.



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Shipwreck Casserole

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound lean ground beef
- 2 cups frozen broccoli, carrots & peas
- 1 can diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 2 teaspoons seasoned salt
- 2 1/2 cups thawed hash browns
- 2 cups shredded cheddar cheese
- 1/4 cup sour cream
- 1/2 teaspoon salt and black pepper
- 1 cup corn flakes
- 1 tablespoon butter, melted

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 375°F. Lightly grease a 2-qt. baking dish. Brown the ground beef. Stir in frozen vegetables, undrained tomatoes, tomato paste, and seasoned salt. Combine potatoes, 1 cup cheddar cheese, sour cream, salt, and pepper in a bowl. Spread and press evenly in the casserole dish. Spread ground beef mixture evenly over the top. Sprinkle with remaining 1 cup cheese. Combine cornflakes and butter; sprinkle over the top of the casserole. Bake 35 to 38 minutes or until golden brown.

(Recipe courtesy BHG.com)

