

Dangers Of Carbon Monoxide

Carbon monoxide is an odorless, tasteless and colorless gas produced by incomplete combustion. Under certain conditions, solid fuel, liquid fuels or gaseous fuels can produce lethal concentrations of this dangerous gas.

Approximately 500 non-fire related carbon monoxide poisoning deaths and thousands of hospitalizations occur each year.

Major sources of carbon monoxide include furnaces, motor vehicles, ranges/ovens, water heaters, generators, engine driven tools, space heaters and charcoal grills.

Carbon monoxide exposures are highly seasonal and occur more frequently in the winter months in cold climates. Fatalities in adults over 65 years of age occur about twice as often as fatalities within the rest of the population. Automobile incidents comprise about half the non-fire carbon monoxide incidents and very frequently involve idling vehicles. About two-thirds of all carbon monoxide exposures occur in the home or a habitational structure. The remaining exposures occur in public areas, the workplace and temporary shelters.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include shortness of breath, nausea, dizziness, light headedness and headaches. High levels of carbon monoxide can be fatal and kill within minutes of exposure.

Regular maintenance of gas burning equipment is vital and should be considered the first line of defense in minimizing exposure to this potentially lethal gas. Regular maintenance should not be neglected even if carbon monoxide detectors are installed. The possibility of a sudden failure of a gas burning appliance always exists and must be accounted for.

To protect against this silent killer here are some recommendations that will help alert both property owners and tenants about carbon monoxide and prevent exposure.

Property owners:

- » Property owners are legally responsible for supplying and installing all required alarms and must provide one tenant per dwelling unit with written information about alarm testing and maintenance.
- » Equip every dwelling unit with at least one approved (labeled by a recognized testing laboratory like UL) carbon monoxide alarm within 15 feet of every bedroom.
- » Install at least one approved carbon monoxide alarm on each floor of each dwelling.
- » Consider adding alarms to rooms where fuel-burning appliances are located as a means of early warning
- » Property owners should notify the tenant that tampering with, removing, destroying, disconnecting, or removing the batteries from any installed carbon monoxide alarm, except in the course of inspection, maintenance, or replacement of the alarm, is punishable by law.

Tenants:

- » Tenants are responsible for performing monthly carbon monoxide tests and notifying property owner in writing of any deficiencies that the tenant cannot correct.
- » Replacement of batteries is critical. The tenant is responsible for replacing any required batteries in carbon monoxide alarms located in their dwelling unit.
- » During and after a snowstorm, make sure vents for the dryer, furnace, stove, and fireplace are clear of snow build up.
- » If a carbon monoxide alarm sounds: Immediately move to a fresh air location outdoors or by an open window or door and call for help. Remain at the fresh air location until emergency personnel say it is all clear.

NOTE: All residential units must have a working carbon monoxide detector unless the following three requirements are all fulfilled:

- » *The unit does not rely on fossil fuel for heat, ventilation, or hot water.*
- » *The unit is not connected in any way to a garage.*
- » *The unit is not sufficiently close to any ventilated source of carbon monoxide to receive carbon monoxide from that source, as determined by the local building commissioner.*

COMMON SOURCES OF CARBON MONOXIDE

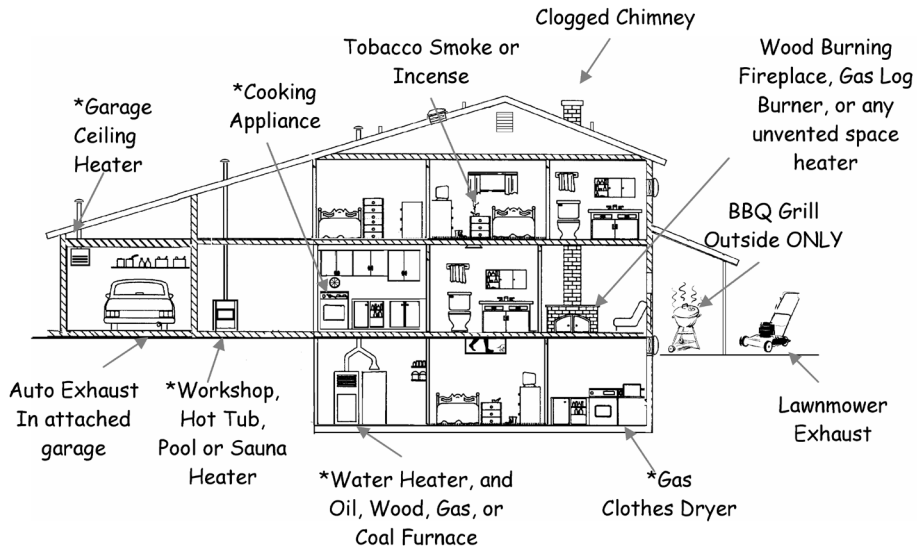


Diagram used by permission of Bacharach, Inc.

For more information about American Family's Loss Control Services, visit www.amfam.com

DISCLAIMER

The recommendations printed here follow generally accepted safety standards. Compliance with these recommendations does not guarantee that you will be in conformance with any building code, or federal, state or local regulations regarding safety or fire. Compliance does not ensure the absolute safety of you, your operations or place of business.