Danger! Carbon Monoxide

What you need to know to protect you and your family from this "silent killer"

What is Carbon Monoxide?
Carbon Monoxide (also called CO) is a poisonous gas that you can't see, smell or taste. It's produced by the incomplete burning of fuels like natural gas, propane, heating oil, kerosene, coal, charcoal or wood due to inadequate air.
Improperly installed or poorly maintained appliances that run on these fuels can create unsafe levels of CO. In enclosed spaces like your home, cottage or vehicle, even a small amount of CO is dangerous.

Learn more:
What are the symptoms of CO poisoning?
What causes a CO hazard?
Be Aware of these danger signs
What should I do if I suspect CO in my home?
About Carbon Monoxide alarms
What you can do to prevent a CO hazard
Take the CO Test to find out your risk

What are the symptoms of CO poisoning?
Exposure to CO can cause flu-like symptoms such as headaches, nausea, dizziness, burning eyes, confusion, drowsiness and even loss of consciousness. In severe cases, it can cause brain damage and death.

Older persons, children people with heart or respiratory conditions and pets may be more sensitive to it, and feel the effects earlier than others.

What causes a CO hazard?

Fuel-burning appliances, venting systems and chimneys that haven’t been serviced or regularly maintained by a **qualified heating contractor**.

A chimney blocked by a bird or squirrel nest, snow and ice or other debris.

Improper venting of a furnace and cracked furnace heat exchangers.

Exhaust fumes seeping into your home from a car running in an attached garage.

Using fuel-burning appliances designed for the outdoors (like BBQs, lanterns, chainsaws, lawnmowers, snowblowers) in a closed area (like a tent, recreational vehicle, cottage, garage, workshop).

Combustion gases spilling into a home if too much air is being consumed by a fireplace, or exhausted by a kitchen or bathroom fan, in a tightly-sealed house.

Be Aware of these Danger Signs

You or others in your family are feeling the symptoms of CO exposure.

You notice a sharp, penetrating odour or smell of gas when your furnace or fuel-burning appliance turns on.

The air feels stale or stuffy.

The pilot light of your gas furnace or other fuel-burning appliance goes out.

Chalky, white power forms on the chimney/exhaust vent pipe, or soot build up around the exhaust vent.

Excessive moisture forms on windows and walls.

The carbon monoxide alarm sounds.

What should I do if I suspect CO in my home?

If you think you or a family member are experiencing symptoms of CO, make sure that everyone leaves the home immediately and gets medical help.

Call 911 or your local fire department.

If a CO alarm sounds in your home, open all doors and windows to ventilate. If the alarm continues, leave your home and contact your local gas utility company or a qualified heating contractor to check your fuel-burning equipment.

About Carbon Monoxide Alarms

CO alarms can warn you about sudden failure of fuel-burning appliances and are a good second line of defence against CO exposure.

Only CO alarms bearing the CSA International CAN/CGA 6.19 standard, or the Underwriters' Laboratories (UL) 2034 standards are recommended for use by TSSA's Carbon Monxide Safety Association.

At least one (1) CO alarm should be installed at knee-height, adjacent to the sleeping area of your home. You will need more than one alarm, if sleeping areas exist on more than one floor.

Unlike smoke, which rises to the ceiling, CO mixes with air. If a combination smoke/carbon monoxide detector is used, it should be located on the ceiling to ensure that it will detect smoke effectively. CO alarms should not be installed near fuel burning appliances.

Follow the manufacturer's instructions for proper use and maintenance.

What you can do to prevent a CO hazard?

Annual inspection and maintenance of all fuel-burning appliances, venting systems and chimneys by a qualified service technician is recommended. If you are adding a new fuel-burning appliance or making changes to your home's ventilation system, make sure you consult with a qualified heating contractor [link to choosing a contractor] to ensure that you home is safe of CO hazards.

CO alarms are a good second line of defence. Take the time to learn about CO alarms in your home to ensure you are locating, installing, testing and maintaining them properly. Remember: they do not replace the need for regular inspection, maintenance and safe use of your fuel-burning appliances.

Increase your knowledge about the dangers of CO and what actions you should take to protect you and your family.