

Safety After The Storm

PROTECTING AGAINST CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

Nausea, dizziness, fatigue and a headache ... they sound like symptoms of the common flu. Unfortunately, they are also early symptoms of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. This deadly gas is hard to detect because it is odorless, colorless and tasteless. However, CO poisoning is avoidable and preventable if the necessary safety measures are taken. UL recommends a three-part strategy that consumers can easily employ to protect themselves and their loved ones from the poisonous gas: **INSTALL and PLAN, INSPECT and TEST and PROTECT and DETECT.**

Install and Plan

- **Determine how many CO alarms you need.** Purchase and install UL Listed CO alarms outside each sleeping area, including the basement and any other locations required by applicable laws. Read the manufacturer's instructions carefully before installing a CO alarm. The UL Mark on a CO alarm means a sample of the product has been tested and met the appropriate safety requirements.
- **Is your CO alarm installed in the right place?** Do not place a CO alarm within five feet of household chemicals. And avoid placing your alarm directly on top of or near fuel-burning appliances, because as these appliances will emit some CO when initially turned on.
- **Create an escape plan.** Draw a simple floor plan of your home. On it, mark two exits from every room, including windows, and an assembly point outside your house. Write "Call 911" on the escape plan, and post it in a central location, such as on the refrigerator door. Hold a drill with all members of your family to be sure everyone understands the plan.
- **Pick a meet-up spot.** An important part of any safety plan is a designated meet-up spot in case disaster prevents you from reaching your home. Choose a family meeting place away from the home and make sure everyone knows how to get there. Families that have discussed where they'll meet and what to do in different situations are always better prepared when disaster strikes.
- **Choose an emergency contact.** Designate an out-of-town relative or friend to be your family's emergency contact, and keep his or her information with you at all times. Let that person know that he or she is your family's go-to person.



Inspect and Test

- **Don't forget to inspect!** Fuel-burning appliances such as furnaces, hot water heaters and stoves require yearly maintenance. Over time, components can become damaged or deteriorate. Have a qualified technician inspect your fuel-burning appliances once a year to identify and repair problems with them.
- **Make sure to test your CO alarm regularly.** Test and replace the battery in your CO alarm at least once a year. If your alarm is wired directly into your home's electrical system, you should test it monthly. If your unit operates off of a battery, test the alarm monthly and replace the battery at least once a year.

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Protect and Detect

- **Know the signs of potential CO poisoning.** CO poisoning may be the cause of flu-like symptoms such as headaches, tightness of chest, dizziness, fatigue, confusion and breathing difficulties. Because CO poisoning often causes a victim's blood pressure to rise, the victim's skin may take on a pink or red cast. If anyone in the home is experiencing symptoms of CO poisoning, immediately evacuate the house, call the fire department and seek medical attention.
- **If your CO alarm goes off, GET OUT – quickly and safely!** A CO alarm's alert indicates elevated levels of CO in the home. Never ignore the alarm. Practice a CO safety escape plan with your family so everyone knows how to react to a CO alarm. If your alarm sounds, evacuate the building and call the fire department. If you or your loved ones experience symptoms of CO poisoning – headache, dizziness or other flu-like symptoms – seek medical attention immediately. And when you return home, be sure to open windows and doors for ventilation. Do not operate any fuel-burning appliances until you have clearly identified the source of the problem. Call a qualified technician to inspect your appliances.
- **Be alert, don't get hurt!** Streaks of carbon or soot around the service door of your fuel-burning appliances, moisture collecting on the windows and walls of furnace rooms, and fallen soot from the fireplace or small amounts of water leaking from the base of the chimney are all signs of a CO problem in your home.

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