

# Carbon Monoxide Safety

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a poisonous gas. It is colourless, odourless, tasteless and non-irritating and, if inhaled, CO can cause illness or death. CO is produced when a fuel, such as gasoline, natural gas, propane or wood, burns incompletely. Fuel-burning appliances can produce CO if they are not installed, used and maintained properly.

## Maintaining fuel-burning appliances

Once a year, a qualified heating contractor should inspect fuel-burning appliances and make necessary repairs. Between inspections, monitor appliances and call a professional if:

- The flame on your natural gas furnace, water heater or stove is yellow. The flame should be a clear blue with occasional yellow tips (some natural gas fireplaces may be designed to have yellow flames).
- You find cracks, holes, separations, rust, stains or carbon deposits on heating ducts or pipes.

## Appliances need proper ventilation

- The chimney should be inspected and cleaned annually. Between inspections, ensure leaves, snow, ice or other debris does not block the chimney.
- Each furnace, water heater, gas clothes dryer or other appliance must have a proper venting system.
- Temporary gas space heaters or wood burning stoves and fireplaces must have a fresh-air supply. If there is no permanent duct, open a window when burning solid fuels or using temporary gas heaters.

## Using appliances and machinery properly

- Once you start your car, move it outside the garage. Never leave a vehicle running in an enclosed space.
- Use only properly designed and vented space heaters to heat any enclosed space.
- Never use fuel-powered equipment such as barbecues, gas-powered lawnmowers, snow-blowers or chainsaws inside a confined space.

## Know the symptoms of CO poisoning

Exposure to CO can lead to loss of consciousness and death. Symptoms of CO exposure include:

- Headaches
- Nausea
- Drowsiness
- Dizziness
- Confusion
- Loss of coordination or judgment

If you, another person or a pet show symptoms of CO poisoning:

- Leave the house immediately.
- Seek professional medical help indicating that you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Call 911 or the local fire department from a neighbour's house.
- **Do not** go back into the house until the fire department says it is safe to do so.

## Carbon Monoxide detectors

A CO detector is not a substitute for prevention but it can be a good second line of defense. Purchase only models certified by a recognized testing agency, and follow manufacturer's instructions for installation, use and maintenance.

For more information, please call 1-866-421-6929 or visit [www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/ss](http://www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/ss).