

MEDIA RELEASE

The Fire Marshall, Chief Medical Health Officer, and WCB Warn of Carbon Monoxide Hazard

Yellowknife, NT (February 14, 2005) – Carbon Monoxide (CO) is an odourless, colourless, and sometimes deadly gas. It is a combustion by-product produced when fuel is burned. It can be emitted by automobiles, gas or oil furnaces, fireplaces, wood stoves, charcoal grills, gas ranges, gas powered refrigerators, gas clothes dryers, water heaters and space heaters. It can be caused by a clogged, blocked, or leaking chimney, disconnected vent, or cracked heat exchanger.

Often called the “silent killer,” CO displaces oxygen in the blood and deprives the heart, brain and other vital organs of oxygen. Symptoms include headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea and vomiting, rapid heartbeat, seizures, tightness of chest, cardiac arrest, blurry vision, discolouration of the skin, loss of consciousness or coma, and respiratory failure.

To minimize the risk of CO exposure:

- Educate yourself about the sources and conditions that may result in CO poisoning and about the symptoms and control of CO exposure.
- Install carbon monoxide detectors in key areas throughout the home or business, such as near sleeping areas and furnace rooms.
- Have furnaces and water heaters inspected, cleaned, and tuned-up on an annual basis.
- Check and clean all chimneys regularly, and check to ensure that gas flames and pilot lights burn clean and blue. Yellow or orange-tipped flames indicate that the gas is not burning properly.
- Maintain equipment and appliances that can produce CO in good working order to promote their safe operation and reduce CO formation.
- Prohibit the use of gasoline powered engines or tools indoors or poorly ventilated areas.
- Make sure that all fuel-burning appliances are properly ventilated.
- Do not start vehicles when the garage door closed. Do not idle vehicles in a garage.

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