



SANTA BARBARA COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT

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PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SANTA BARBARA, Ca. January 5, 2017– Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless, tasteless gas known as the “silent killer” because many people do not realize they’re being poisoned until it’s too late. Initial symptoms of CO poisoning often mimic the flu – including headaches, dizziness and nausea, and are often misdiagnosed.

You can’t see or smell carbon monoxide, but at high levels it can kill a person in minutes. CO is produced whenever any fuel such as gas, oil, kerosene, wood, or charcoal is burned. If appliances that burn fuel are maintained and used properly, the amount of CO produced is usually not hazardous. However, if appliances are not working properly or are used incorrectly, dangerous levels of CO can result. Hundreds of people die accidentally every year from CO poisoning caused by malfunctioning or improperly used fuel-burning appliances. Even more die from CO produced by idling cars. Fetuses, infants, elderly people, and people with anemia or with a history of heart or respiratory disease can be especially susceptible. Be safe. Practice the DO’s and DON’Ts of carbon monoxide.

DO have your fuel-burning appliances -- including oil and gas furnaces, gas water heaters, gas ranges and ovens, gas dryers, gas or kerosene space heaters, fireplaces, and wood stoves - inspected by a trained professional at the beginning of every heating season. Make certain that the flues and chimneys are connected, in good condition, and not blocked.

DO choose appliances that vent their fumes to the outside whenever possible, have them properly installed, and maintain them according to manufacturers’ instructions.

DO read and follow all of the instructions that accompany any fuel-burning device. If you cannot avoid using an unvented gas or kerosene space heater, carefully follow the cautions that come with the device and keep doors to the rest of the house open. Crack a window to ensure enough air for ventilation and proper fuel-burning.

DO install CO alarms outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home, including the basement. The CO alarm can warn you if too much CO is in your home.

DO keep CO alarms clear of dust and debris.

DO ensure CO alarms are plugged all the way into a working outlet, or if battery operated, have working batteries.

DON'T idle the car in a garage -- even if the garage door to the outside is open. Fumes can build up very quickly in the garage and living area of your home.

DON'T use a gas oven to heat your home, even for a short time.

DON'T ever use a charcoal grill indoors -- even in a fireplace.

DON'T sleep in any room with an unvented gas or kerosene space heater.

DON'T use any gasoline-powered engines (mowers, weed trimmers, chain saws, small engines or generators) in enclosed spaces.

DON'T ignore symptoms, particularly if more than one person is feeling them. You could lose consciousness and die if you do nothing.

CO poisoning can occur anywhere, to anyone, at any time. The Santa Barbara County Fire Department reminds people that CO poisoning is easily preventable with a working CO alarm.

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