

Living Safely

with disabilities and special health needs

Understanding Carbon Monoxide

Carbon monoxide is an invisible, odorless, colorless gas created when fuels (such as gasoline, wood, coal, natural gas, propane, oil, and methane) burn incompletely.

Breathing too much carbon monoxide can kill you. In a home or apartment, heating and cooking equipment that burn fuel can be sources of carbon monoxide.

It is important to have a carbon monoxide alarm in your home or apartment. Some newer model smoke alarms are a 2-in-1 fire and carbon monoxide (CO) alarm. Choose a CO alarm that has a qualified testing laboratory label on the package or alarm.

CO alarms should be installed in a central location outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home as well as in other locations where required by laws, codes or standards. When installing a CO alarm, always follow the manufacturer's instructions for where to put it and how high to place it on the wall.

To make sure you are safe, it is helpful to connect all the CO alarms together in your home or apartment so that if one alarm goes off, they will all sound.

Test your CO alarms once a month. To test your CO alarm, press the test button on the alarm. Replace CO alarms according to the manufacturer's instructions.

If the trouble signal sounds, check for low batteries. If the battery is low, replace it. If it still sounds, call the fire department.

If the CO alarm sounds, immediately move to outside to get fresh air. Make sure everyone who was inside your house or apartment gets outside too. Call for help from a fresh air location and stay there until emergency responders tell you that it is safe to come back inside.

Gas or charcoal grills can produce CO so only use them outside.

If you need to warm a vehicle, drive out of the garage as soon as you start the vehicle. Do not run a vehicle or other fueled engine or motor indoors, even if garage doors are open. Make sure the exhaust pipe of a running vehicle is not covered with snow.

During and after a snowstorm, make sure vents for the clothes dryer, furnace, stove, and fireplace are clear of snow build-up.

If using a generator, make sure it is in a well-ventilated location outdoors away from windows, doors and vent openings.

We value the expertise of our partners in safety who have demonstrated their commitment to inclusive healthy communities. Portions of this resource have been adapted from Safe Kids Worldwide (www.safekids.org).

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