

Preventing Carbon Monoxide Exposure

Carbon Monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless gas which can cause sudden illness or death. It is produced whenever fossil fuels are burned. As cold weather approaches and use of fuel-burning appliances increases, the Job Corps national office recommend that centers take the following preventive measures to avoid CO exposure:

- a. Be sure a qualified technician inspects fuel-burning appliances at least once each year. Fuel-burning appliances such as furnaces, hot-water heaters, and stoves require yearly maintenance. Over time, components can become damaged or deteriorated. A qualified technician can identify and repair problems.
- b. Be aware that CO poisoning may cause flu-like symptoms such as headaches, tightness of chest, dizziness, fatigue, confusion, and breathing difficulties. CO poisoning often causes a victim's blood pressure to rise, and the victim's skin may take on a pink or red tone.
- c. Install an Underwriters Laboratory (UL)-listed CO detector, as recommended by the Job Corps national office, outside sleeping areas. A UL-listed CO detector will sound an alarm before dangerous levels of CO accumulate. CO indicator cards and other devices are also intended to detect elevated levels of CO, but most are not equipped with an audible alarm, and cannot wake you at night when many CO poisoning incidents occur.
- d. Know how to respond to a CO detector alarm. If the alarm sounds, immediately open windows and doors for ventilation. If anyone in the area is experiencing symptoms of CO poisoning (headache, dizziness, or other flu-like symptoms) immediately evacuate the area and notify the fire department. If no one is experiencing these symptoms, continue to ventilate, turn off fuel-burning appliances, and call a qualified technician to inspect the heating system and appliances as soon as possible. Do not operate any fuel-burning appliances until you have clearly identified the source of the problem.
- e. Read the manufacturer's instructions carefully before installing a CO detector. Do not place the detector within 5 feet of household chemicals. If your detector is wired directly into your center's electrical system, you should test it monthly. If your unit is battery operated, test the detector weekly and replace the battery at least once a year.
- f. Place CO monitors no higher than 4 feet from the ground (normal breathing zones). This is to ensure potential detection of actionable levels of CO.

- g. Avoid placing your CO detector on top of, or across from fuel-burning appliances. These appliances will emit some CO when initially turned on.
- h. Never use charcoal or gas grills inside a dorm, tent, camper, garage, or any other unventilated area.
- i. Do not leave fuel-burning vehicles running in an enclosed garage.

Safe Use of Supplemental Heating Systems

When using supplemental heating systems, the National Office of Job Corps recommends that centers:

- a. Only use equipment with UL tag or label.
- b. Use equipment with a thermostat control to conserve energy and prevent overheating.
- c. Purchase heaters that are rated for a specific room size.
- d. Purchase new heaters only (avoid second-hand units).
- e. Remove unvented kerosene and natural gas units from service. Most states prohibit their use indoors.
- f. Permanently locate vented units next to an outside wall, to allow for installation of a flue gas vent through a ceiling, or directly through the wall to the outside.
- g. Purchase vented sealed combustion or 100 percent outdoor air heaters because they are much safer to operate and are more efficient.
- h. Have vented space heaters professionally inspected annually.