

HAYS Matters

City of Hays Fire Department

Public Education Program

CARBON MONOXIDE The Silent Killer

Carbon monoxide is an odorless, poison gas that can be in your home without any warning. Dangerous amounts of carbon monoxide are created by malfunctioning or poorly maintained gas, oil or wood fired heating and cooking equipment. Additionally, carbon monoxide is given off by car and truck exhaust and may be dangerous if allowed to build-up in your garage.

Persons who are poisoned by carbon monoxide often become sick and confused before they recognize the danger. They may be unable to call for help or even get out of the home before they become unconscious. In extreme cases, death may result. Symptoms of slow carbon monoxide poisoning include flu-like illness and throbbing headache. Persons exposed to high levels of carbon monoxide may quickly become unconscious and die.

Other signs that carbon monoxide may be present in your home include stale, stuffy air, exhaust fumes or burning odor or other unfamiliar smell. A furnace that runs constantly but does not provide adequate heat or any malfunction of heating, cooking or clothes drying equipment may also be clues that there is a carbon monoxide problem.

Every home should have a working carbon monoxide detector for protection. These inexpensive devices sound an alarm when prolonged low levels of carbon monoxide are detected. This early alarm allows for you to take action before it is too late. Remember, without a carbon monoxide alarm there is no reliable way to tell if dangerous levels of carbon monoxide are in your home.

If your carbon monoxide alarm sounds: Actuation of your carbon monoxide alarm indicates the presence of carbon monoxide which can kill you. In other words, when your carbon monoxide alarm sounds, *you must not ignore it!*

- **Call the Fire Department by dialing 9-1-1.**
- **Immediately move to fresh air.**
- **Check that all persons are accounted for.**
- **Do not reenter the building.**

Trained firefighters will be promptly dispatched to check for the presence of carbon monoxide and help you identify the problem.

For more information or the dangers of carbon monoxide or the use of carbon monoxide detectors contact your Hays Fire Department at 628-7330.

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IF CARBON MONOXIDE HAS BEEN FOUND IN YOUR HOME OR YOUR DETECTOR HAS ACTIVATED:

Your carbon monoxide detector is designed to sound an alarm before there is an immediate threat to life. A carbon monoxide detector measures exposure over time. It sounds an alarm if carbon monoxide levels are extremely high over a short period of time or if carbon monoxide reaches a certain minimum over a long time. Carbon monoxide levels in excess of 10 parts per million exceed the Environmental Protection Agency's standard for homes. Firefighters will wear protective breathing apparatus if the level of carbon monoxide exceeds 35 parts per million.

If firefighters have determined that there is less than 10 parts per million of carbon monoxide in your home, you should reset your detector. It could be that this was a false alarm or that your detector has malfunctioned and should be replaced. It could also be that the house was aired out before firefighters arrived and the carbon monoxide levels have been reduced. *If your detector alarms again, call 9-1-1 right away.*

If firefighters have determined that there is between 10 and 100 parts per million of carbon monoxide in your home, you should leave your home until the problem can be corrected. This is a dangerous situation. It will not be safe until a licensed plumber, heating contractor or appliance repair technician can locate and correct the problem.

If firefighters have determined that carbon monoxide in excess of 100 parts per million is in your home, you should leave your home immediately. **This level of carbon monoxide is deadly.** It will not be safe until a licensed plumber, heating contractor or appliance repair technician can locate and correct the problem.

Remember! Carbon monoxide is an *odorless, colorless, tasteless gas* that is produced in dangerous amounts when fossil fuels do not burn properly. You cannot determine if carbon monoxide is present except by the alarm of a working carbon monoxide alarm or by special testing equipment.

Some persons are more sensitive to carbon monoxide than others, including people with heart or lung disease, infants, unborn babies, pregnant mothers or senior citizens. These people may become sick or even die at lower levels of carbon monoxide. Extra care should be taken if these persons are present in the home.