Indoor Sources of Carbon Monoxide: Safety for Homes

Carbon monoxide occurs naturally when any fuel is burned like coal, wood, charcoal, oil, kerosene, propane and natural gas. Home appliances such as natural gas furnaces, clothes dryers, ranges and ovens, water heaters and propane appliances such as heaters, water heaters and similar products produce carbon monoxide. It is also produced from engine powered equipment like portable generators, cars, lawn mowers and power washers. These gases may enter your home through the garage or from being used too close to the living space of the house.

- Carbon monoxide (CO) is a tasteless, odorless, colorless gas that is poisonous. Carbon monoxide can kill you.

- Hundreds of deaths a year are due to excessive carbon monoxide in the home. It is the number one poisoning in the United States.

- Every home should have a carbon monoxide detector. In fact, your home might need more than one detector. CO detectors should be placed near the sleeping areas of the home, so if your bedrooms are on different floors or on different sides of the home, you will need a detector for each area and/or floor. Detectors should be a plug in model with a battery back up.

- If a combination unit is installed to warn you about smoke and carbon monoxide, **you must know the difference between the two alarms**. Please read the manufacturer’s information.

- Carbon monoxide detectors are very reliable and are designed to sound an alarm **BEFORE** the carbon monoxide level in the air is dangerous.
If the CO alarm sounds, you have a buildup of carbon monoxide. Go outside immediately to fresh air. However, low levels of CO that do not trigger the alarm are still unhealthy, so it is best to choose models that show a reading of the CO level. Then you can monitor the CO level in your home. Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include headache, nausea, fatigue and dizziness – flu like symptoms. The more carbon monoxide in the air, the more severe your symptoms will be. If you believe you have carbon monoxide poisoning, seek medical attention immediately and be sure to tell the doctor and/or nurse you think you have carbon monoxide poisoning.

Before returning to your home, contact a heating, ventilation and air conditioning technician (HVAC) to find the cause of the carbon monoxide leak or problem.

For more information contact your local county Extension office or call 1-800-ASK-UGA1