

Subject: Preventing Carbon Monoxide Poisoning**March 2012**

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless gas known as the “silent killer.” According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, it is the leading cause of accidental poisoning deaths nationwide, with more than 400 deaths and 20,000 hospital visits every year. People are often unaware they are experiencing CO poisoning until it causes physical symptoms such as:

- Headache, dizziness, and nausea.
- Weakness, vomiting, chest pain, and disorientation.

Sources of CO can include any solid, liquid, or gaseous fuel-fired appliance, fireplace, etc., or motor vehicle. While everyone is at risk, infants and people with chronic heart disease, anemia, or respiratory problems are particularly susceptible.

Ways to prevent CO poisoning:

- Ensure that CO alarms are installed in your home and in all buildings containing a potential CO source. It’s the law. Alarms must comply with Underwriters Laboratories (UL) 2034 or Canadian Standards Association (CSA) 6.19.
- Alarms should be checked regularly to ensure they are operational. A good practice is to replace batteries every spring and fall.
- Never burn charcoal inside a home, garage, or tent.
- Have your heating system, water heater, and any other gas, oil, or coal burning appliances serviced by a qualified technician every year.
- Never operate fuel-burning appliances without proper ventilation.
- Do not use portable flameless chemical (catalytic) heaters indoors.
- Regularly examine vents and chimneys for improper connections, rust, soot, or other debris.
- Never run a vehicle, generator, or other fuel powered motor indoors or in an attached garage.

Always remember that carbon monoxide alarms are not substitutes for smoke alarms. Smoke alarms should also be installed on every level of a home as well as in or outside of all sleeping areas. The National Fire Protection Association recommends that CO alarms be installed in a central location outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home.

If you suspect poisoning or your CO alarm sounds:

- Ensure that everyone exits the building to the outdoors quickly and safely.
- Call emergency services (your local fire department or 911) for further assistance.
- See a physician for proper diagnosis.

For additional information, please visit www.cdc.gov/co, contact your DDSO, or OPWDD’s Office of Safety & Security at 518-474-9897.