

# Carbon Monoxide Safety Information from New Mexico Gas Company

Driven to Deliver

The information in this newsletter will help protect you, your family and friends from the risks of carbon monoxide.

## WHAT IS IT?

- Carbon monoxide is an odorless, invisible gas that is produced when any type of fuel — like natural gas, gasoline, kerosene, methane, propane, oil, coal and wood — burns incompletely because of insufficient air and ventilation.

## WHAT ARE THE DANGERS?

- When carbon monoxide builds up indoors, or in any enclosed or partially-enclosed space, it can put you and others in danger of carbon monoxide poisoning.
- When you breathe in carbon monoxide, this toxic gas blocks oxygen from being absorbed — cutting off oxygen to your brain, organs and cells — and can be life-threatening. Carbon monoxide poisoning is one of the leading causes of unintentional/accidental poisoning deaths in the United States. Carbon monoxide poisonings are highest during the winter months.

## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING?

- Carbon monoxide can cause a range of symptoms, depending on the amount of gas you are exposed to and the length of exposure. At lower exposures, symptoms can range from mild headaches, fatigue or sleepiness, shortness of breath, light headedness and nausea. More exposure can lead to mental confusion, impaired judgment or memory, loss of coordination, loss of consciousness and even death.
- At lower exposures, the symptoms can seem like a cold or flu except they will usually get better when you're away from home, they aren't accompanied by a fever or swollen lymph nodes, and pets may also appear sick or sluggish.
- If your carbon monoxide alarm goes off, or anytime you suspect a carbon monoxide problem, call the New Mexico Gas Company Emergency Line at 888-NM-GAS-CO (888-664-2726).



## WHERE DOES CARBON MONOXIDE COME FROM?

- Potential sources of carbon monoxide can include any fuel-burning appliance that is inadequately vented, poorly-maintained, worn or improperly adjusted.
- Improperly using fuel-burning devices indoors or in enclosed or partially-enclosed areas around the home is a special hazard. This can include using any fuel-burning devices not designed to be safely used indoors such as grills, unvented kerosene or propane space heaters, propane camp lanterns and stoves, and gasoline-powered tools. Using a gas oven or dryer to heat your home can also risk carbon monoxide build-up.
- Chimneys can also be a source of carbon monoxide in your home. Make sure your chimney is in good working order.
- Weatherization and efforts to reduce air leakage and create a more energy efficient home are recommended. However, they can also reduce the fresh air required for furnaces and other fuel-burning appliances in the home, leading to increased risks of carbon monoxide.
- Warming up vehicles in a carport or an attached garage, even with the garage door opened, can allow carbon monoxide to enter your home.

### If you experience symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning:

**Get to fresh air immediately.** Open the doors and windows, turn off any fuel-burning appliances, and leave the building.

**Immediately call** the New Mexico Poison Center — 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, toll free, at 800-222-1222. These experts will help you know if you need further medical attention.

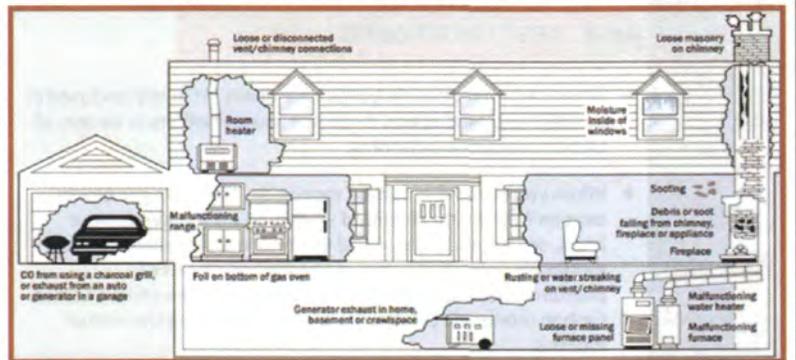
**POISON**  
**Help**  
1-800-222-1222

## PREVENTING CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

- The most important way to help protect you and your family from carbon monoxide poisoning is to make sure that all fuel burning appliances in your home are installed professionally and maintained properly.
- Safely install gas and other fuel-burning appliances. Make sure new natural gas appliances are installed according to the manufacturer's instructions and local codes. Most appliances should be installed by professionals.
- Potentially dangerous problems with furnace or gas appliances are not always visible. Have your furnace and other natural gas appliances inspected and serviced by a licensed plumber or heating contractor annually, ideally just before winter.
- Your furnace may also require adjustments, burner cleaning, repairs or replacement of worn parts to make sure it is working safely and efficiently. A dirty and poorly running or ventilated furnace, especially an older one, can build up dangerous amounts of carbon monoxide. Please see our Web site, [www.nmgco.com/Furnace\\_Safety\\_Checks](http://www.nmgco.com/Furnace_Safety_Checks), for more information on recommended furnace safety checks.
- Every year, before turning on your gas fireplace or furnace for the winter, it's also recommended that you have your chimney, flues and vents cleaned and inspected by a certified chimney sweep and have any problems corrected or repaired.
- A dirty chimney can cause carbon monoxide to build up and seep into your home. Regularly examine your vents and chimneys for poor connections, visible cracks, rust or stains.
- More information on chimney safety and the proper venting of gas appliances and fireplaces is available from the Chimney Safety Institute of America at [www.csia.org](http://www.csia.org).



- Don't use non-vented fuel-burning appliances inside. Opening doors and windows or using fans will NOT prevent carbon monoxide from building up inside. Use only fuel-burning devices and heaters designed to be safely used inside.
- Fuel-burning devices not designed to be safely used inside can include propane or kerosene space heaters, camping equipment, outdoor grills and portable generators. When using these devices outside, also keep them away from open doors, vents or windows.
- Never heat your home using a gas oven, range or clothes dryer.
- Never warm up the car or leave the engine running while parked in the garage, even with the garage door open, or when it is parked and covered with snow.
- Open the flue before using your fireplace or furnace. Always make sure to open the damper, that keeps cool air from coming in when the gas furnace or fireplace are not in use, before using your gas fireplace or furnace.
- Avoid lining your gas oven with foil. Never put foil on bottom of a gas oven because it interferes with the complete burning of the gas.



## Carbon Monoxide Detectors

The second line of protection from carbon monoxide poisoning for you and your family is to properly install and maintain a carbon monoxide detector in your home. Half of all unintentional deaths from carbon monoxide poisoning could be prevented with the proper use of carbon monoxide detectors, which are designed to alarm when carbon monoxide levels rise and before you experience symptoms.

### If your alarm goes off, never ignore it!

- Immediately turn off all fuel-burning devices and potential sources of carbon monoxide, open the doors and windows to bring fresh air into the building, and get everyone out.
- Contact New Mexico Gas Company at 888-NM-GAS-CO (888-664-2726). Be sure a qualified service technician has fixed the problem and ensured that the building is safe before restarting appliances or re-entering the building.



### What to look for when buying a carbon monoxide detector

When choosing a carbon monoxide detector, look only for products that are certified to meet the Underwriters Laboratory (UL) 2034 Standard (1998 revision). Check the package for the UL symbol and the phrase "single station carbon monoxide alarm." The manufacturing date of the model should be after January 1, 2000, when the revised UL standards were enacted. Select a detector that is battery-operated or has a battery backup to ensure it will work during a power outage. Look for models that have a test button, which will allow you to check the alarm and make sure it is working properly.

### Installing a carbon monoxide detector

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends that you install a carbon monoxide detector outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home. Please follow the manufacturers' instructions carefully for proper placement, as well as how often to replace your detector.

### Maintaining your carbon monoxide detector

It is recommended that you test your carbon monoxide alarms once a month and replace dead batteries, and change batteries regularly as recommended by the manufacturer.

You'll find print-ready copies of free brochures and more information on carbon monoxide and carbon monoxide detectors on our Web site at:  
[www.nmgco.com/Carbon\\_Monoxide](http://www.nmgco.com/Carbon_Monoxide).



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