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Monthly Safety Blast

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FOR AGRICULTURAL HEALTH, INJURY PREVENTION

Aside from a nativity scene or a real fir tree, the fireplace is one of the most iconic symbols of the Christmas season. It's a place to gather for warmth as the season's chill settles in. However, if a fireplace isn't properly maintained, a carbon monoxide (CO) fatality could be the devastating result.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), carbon monoxide poisoning occurs when carbon monoxide builds up in your bloodstream. When too much carbon monoxide is in the air, your body replaces the oxygen in your red blood cells with carbon monoxide. This can lead to serious tissue damage or even death.

Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless, tasteless gas produced by burning gasoline, wood, propane, charcoal or other fuel. Improperly ventilated appliances and engines, particularly in a tightly sealed or enclosed space, may allow carbon monoxide to accumulate to dangerous levels.

Signs and symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning may include:

- Dull headache



- Weakness
- Dizziness
- Nausea or vomiting
- Shortness of breath
- Confusion
- Blurred vision
- Loss of consciousness

Carbon monoxide poisoning can be particularly dangerous for people who are sleeping. People may have irreversible brain damage or even die before anyone realizes there's a problem.

Prevention:

Simple precautions can help prevent carbon monoxide poisoning:

- **Do** have your heating system, water heater and any other gas, oil, or coal burning appliances serviced by a qualified technician every year.
- **Do** install a battery-operated or battery back-up CO detector in your home and check or replace the battery when you change the time on your clocks each spring and fall. If the detector sounds leave your home immediately and call 911.
- **Do** seek prompt medical attention if you suspect CO poisoning and are feeling dizzy, light-headed, or nauseated.
- **Don't** use a generator, charcoal grill, camp stove, or other gasoline or charcoal-burning device inside your home, basement, barn, or garage or near a window.
- **Don't** run a car or truck inside a garage attached to your house, even if you leave the door open. Never leave a running tractor inside your barn, even with the bay doors opened.
- **Don't** burn anything in a stove or fireplace that isn't vented.
- **Don't** heat your house with a gas oven.
- **Don't** use a generator, pressure washer, or any gasoline-powered engine less than 20 feet from any window, door, or vent.

The warning signs of carbon monoxide poisoning can be subtle, but the condition is a life-threatening medical emergency. If you think you or someone you're with may have carbon monoxide poisoning, get into fresh air and seek emergency medical care.



References:



Take the [Carbon Monoxide and the Holidays](#) quiz to test your knowledge!

Disclaimer: The facts and information listed above are merely suggestions for your safety, but are in no way a comprehensive and exhaustive list of all actions needed to insure your safety.

Monthly Blast by our Outreach Health Education Coordinator, Nykole Kafka Vance, MS, CEP, CHES



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