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## PRESS RELEASE

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **DON'T BE CAUGHT OFF GUARD**

***Know the hazards associated with carbon monoxide gas.***

#### ***Photo by Canva***

It's colorless, odorless, tasteless, and potentially deadly. CO is a common hazard resulting from the incomplete burning of carbon-containing material, such as natural gas, gasoline, kerosene, oil, propane, coal, or wood. To avoid breathing in toxic levels of carbon monoxide, be aware of how this gas is generated and take steps to prevent it.

On the farm, common sources of CO include internal combustion engines such as portable generators, vehicles, lawnmowers, and power washers.

According to the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), approximately 170 people die yearly from CO produced by non-automotive consumer products. These products include malfunctioning fuel-burning appliances such as furnaces, ranges, water heaters, and portable heaters. Fireplaces and charcoal burned in homes and other enclosed areas can also produce CO. In 2005, CPSC staff documented at least 94 generator-related CO poisoning deaths. Among them, 47 were known to have occurred during power outages due to severe weather. Other CO deaths can occur because of vehicles left running in an attached garage. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that several thousand people visit hospital emergency rooms every year seeking treatment for CO poisoning.

Symptoms of CO poisoning include:

- Headache
- Fatigue
- Shortness of breath

- Nausea
- Dizziness

When CO levels in a person's body are high, the person may experience:

- Mental confusion
- Vomiting
- Loss of muscular coordination
- Loss of consciousness
- Ultimately death

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), carbon monoxide, when breathed in, displaces oxygen in the blood and deprives the heart, brain, and other vital organs of oxygen. Large amounts of CO can overcome a person in minutes, resulting in loss of consciousness and suffocation.

Whenever CO poisoning symptoms are experienced, getting to fresh air is critical. If the symptoms occur inside the home, get outside and call 911. Remaining inside a house or other enclosed areas with high levels of CO could result in death.

It's also crucial to consult a physician for proper diagnosis and medical attention. If CO poisoning is confirmed, ensure any appliances that were a CO source are repaired or replaced. If the incident occurred inside an improperly vented enclosure, update the venting.

CO alarms are designed to sound before potentially life-threatening CO levels are reached. Safety standards for these alarms have continually improved, and current alarms are more reliable than those used in the past. Install an alarm according to the manufacturer's instructions, and never ignore a CO alarm. While an alarm provides some added protection, there is no substitute for proper use and upkeep of appliances that can produce CO. Interconnected CO alarms offer the best protection. When one sounds, they all sound. Ensure that the alarm is not located in a space that can be covered by furniture or draperies.

Activities that may put people at risk include:

- Welding
- Mechanic work in an unvented garage
- Firefighting
- Diesel engine operation
- Operating a forklift

To help prevent CO poisoning:

- Ensure appliances are installed and operated according to the manufacturer's instructions. Use qualified professionals for installation. Have heating systems professionally inspected and serviced annually to ensure proper operation. The inspector should also check chimneys and flues for blockages, corrosion, partial and complete disconnections, and loose connections.
- Only service fuel-burning appliances if you have the proper knowledge, skills, and tools. Always refer to the owner's manual when performing minor adjustments or servicing fuel-burning equipment.
- Never operate a portable generator or any gasoline engine-powered tool in or near an enclosed space such as a garage, house, or other building. Even with open doors and windows, these spaces can trap CO and allow it to build to lethal levels quickly.
- Only use portable fuel-burning camping equipment inside a home, garage, vehicle, or tent if it is specifically designed for use in enclosed spaces and provides instructions for safe use in an enclosed area.

- Never burn charcoal inside a home, garage, vehicle, or tent.
- Never leave a car running in an attached garage, even with open doors.
- Never use gas appliances such as ranges, ovens, or clothes dryers to heat your home.

Find additional details at <https://www.cdc.gov/co/copoisoningfactsheet.html>.

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