

Carbon Monoxide Alarms Could Prevent Half of All CO Poisoning Deaths

Columbus, GA – With the arrival of the holiday season comes the arrival of colder weather, as well as an increase in the number of fuel-burning appliances being used in the home. These appliances include ovens, space heaters, generators, indoor grills and fireplaces, and they can cause dangerous levels of carbon monoxide (CO) to build up in the home.

“Families today are better at understanding the importance of having working smoke alarms in every sleeping area, but what about carbon monoxide alarms?” says Christy Hubbard, Safe Kids Columbus coordinator. “Carbon monoxide is so dangerous because it is odorless, invisible, and it can kill. CO can make a child seriously ill in small doses that might not noticeably affect an adult.”

According to a study from 2004 to 2006, children younger than 5 years old have the highest estimated rate of CO-related visits to the emergency room each year among all age groups in the United States. More than 25 kids die from CO poisoning every year.

Important safety tips to protect families from CO poisoning:

- Prevent CO buildup in the first place - make sure heating appliances are in good working order and used only in well-ventilated areas.
- Don't run a car engine in the garage, even to warm it up; move the car outside first.
- Install a CO alarm outside every sleeping area, on every level of your home and at least 15 feet away from every fuel-burning appliance.
- When you check your smoke alarm batteries each month, check the batteries on your CO alarms at the same time – and replace the batteries twice a year.
- Never use a stove for heating.
- Have all gas, oil or coal burning appliances inspected by a technician every year to ensure they're working correctly and are properly ventilated.
- If a CO leak is suspected, open windows to allow fresh air into the home. If someone who has been in a poorly ventilated room with a fuel-burning appliance exhibits symptoms including headache, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, or confusion, move the victim to fresh air and call 911.

If more than one person in the home suddenly feels ill for no apparent reason, or if a CO alarm goes off, get everyone outside immediately and call 911 from a pre-arranged meeting place. “CO alarms are available at hardware stores for about \$20,” adds Hubbard. “That is a small price to pay to help detect odorless, poisonous gases in the home before it's too late.”

For more information about CO poisoning or CO alarms, call Safe Kids Columbus at (706) 321-6183, visit www.safekidscolumbusga.com, or call the poison control hotline at (800) 222-1222.

For more information about preventing airway obstruction, call (706) 321-6183 or visit www.safekidscolumbusga.com. Safe Kids Columbus works to prevent accidental childhood injury, the leading killer of children 14 and under. Its members include public safety agencies, teachers, EMTs, county commissioners, health educators, nurses, civic groups, faith-based organizations, public health organizations, local government, and many others concerned about the well being of our children. Safe Kids Columbus is a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations dedicated to preventing accidental injury. Safe Kids Columbus was founded in 1998 and is led by the Columbus Health Department.