



# Is your home safe for the heating season?

Don't wait until the temperature drops. **Take action now** to ensure your home is safe from carbon monoxide (CO) before the heating season begins.

## Why should I care about CO?

Carbon monoxide is an invisible, odourless, tasteless and poisonous gas. Exposure to high levels can kill in just minutes or a few hours. It can be produced when you use your furnace, fireplace, or any other fuel-burning appliance. Poor maintenance, damaged or blocked venting, improper use of appliances, or inadequate air flow can cause dangerous levels of CO to build up inside your home.

## Fireplaces need your attention too!

When we think of heating systems, fireplaces aren't usually the first thing that comes to mind, but they too, along with your chimney, need to be inspected and maintained on an annual basis by a qualified professional.

## How do I avoid high levels of CO exposure in my home?

- **Inspect and maintain your furnace and fireplace:** Eliminate build up of CO at the source by scheduling an annual inspection and maintenance of your fuel-burning appliances with a qualified heating contractor.
- **Keep all outside vents clear of blockage:** Ensure all outside gas appliance vents are not damaged and blocked from any objects or other obstructions such as snow and ice. This will avoid CO being drawn back inside your house.

## Is your home heated by a natural gas boiler?

Natural gas atmospheric boilers should be checked annually by a qualified service technician to ensure it is operating safely.

- **Let your house breathe:** If your house is too airtight, CO will be produced, as your fuel-burning appliances need enough fresh air to completely burn its fuel. In addition, powerful exhaust fans in bathrooms and kitchens can actually create a negative pressure inside your home, resulting in a backdraft which will draw exhaust fumes from your furnace, hot water heater or other appliances back into the home. If your home is tightly sealed to make it energy efficient, to avoid potential CO hazards consider getting a professionally installed air exchanger or a heating system with a direct feed of air.

## How can I be warned of CO exposure in my home?

- **Install approved CO alarms.** They will warn you of rising levels of CO, giving you and your family time to escape. Follow the manufacturer's instructions on where to install them in your home. Test the units once a month and change batteries annually when you change your clocks in the fall.
- **Know the symptoms of CO poisoning.** They are similar to the flu – nausea, headache, burning eyes, confusion and drowsiness – except there is no fever. If they appear, it is imperative to get everyone, including pets, outside to fresh air immediately and call 911 or the local fire department.

Check out [www.safetyinfo.ca](http://www.safetyinfo.ca) for more home safety tips or call the Technical Standards & Safety Authority (TSSA) at **1-877-682-8772**.

Kitchener Utilities Inspections, Service and Repairs call **519-741-2529**, select option #2. Natural Gas Emergencies call **519-741-2541**.

