

Carbon monoxide can be deadly.



Learn how to protect yourself and your family

WHAT IS CARBON MONOXIDE?

You can't see it. It's an odourless, tasteless gas which, when inhaled, interferes with the body's ability to absorb oxygen. It is extremely toxic in high enough concentrations and can kill in just minutes or a few hours.

What are some of the sources of carbon monoxide?

Carbon monoxide can be produced by the incomplete combustion (burning) of various fuels such as wood, oil, coal, charcoal, natural gas, gasoline, kerosene, or diesel fuel. Proper installation, venting, and maintenance of natural gas appliances will prevent the release of carbon monoxide.

Danger signs to be aware of

- You notice a sharp, penetrating odour or smell of gas when your furnace or fuel-burning appliance turns on.
- The air feels stale or stuffy.
- The pilot light of your gas furnace or other fuel-burning appliance goes out.
- Chalky, white powder forms on the chimney/exhaust vent pipe, or soot builds up around the exhaust vent.
- Excessive moisture forms on windows and walls.

What are some of the symptoms of carbon monoxide exposure?

Carbon monoxide symptoms can be confused with those of the flu, so it can be hard to detect carbon monoxide poisoning. Symptoms can include:

Mild exposure – slight headaches, fatigue, and shortness of breath.

Moderate exposure – headaches, dizziness, weakness, vision and hearing impairment, fainting, and loss of muscle control.

Severe exposure – unconsciousness, convulsions, cardiorespiratory failure, coma, brain damage, and death.

Generally, if you have any of these symptoms, and they tend to disappear when you leave home, they may be caused by carbon monoxide.

Exposure to high levels of carbon monoxide can be fatal.

What to do if you suspect carbon monoxide

If your carbon monoxide detector goes off or if someone in your house is exhibiting symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning, leave your home, call 911, and ask for the fire department.

If there are no medical symptoms, and your alarm has not gone off, but you suspect that carbon monoxide may be coming from one of your natural gas appliances, immediately get everyone out of the house. Call Kitchener Utilities at 519-741-2541 for an immediate inspection.

You should install a carbon monoxide detector

A carbon monoxide detector is a good investment for the protection of your family. Most detectors are easy to install and include instructions as to where they should be installed.

There are basically three types of carbon monoxide detectors available: a battery-powered unit that may be connected in series, a 110-120 volt hard-wired style that may be connected in series, and a plug-in type that can be plugged into a 110-120 volt outlet. Any of these are acceptable, provided the unit is approved (CSA, ULC, UL, etc.).

The recommended placement for use can be anywhere within a dwelling except in close proximity to a furnace, fireplace, or other heating appliance. Floor to ceiling placement is not important, as carbon monoxide has the same specific gravity as air.

Note: There are requirements in the Ontario Building Code that stipulate you must have a carbon monoxide detector with all new residential construction where a fuel-burning appliance is installed (i.e., a furnace or wood-burning fireplace) or if you have an attached garage. Please contact one of the City's Building Officials at 519-741-2433 for more information.

Information provided by Technical Standards & Safety Authority (TSSA).

HOW YOU CAN REDUCE THE RISK OF CARBON MONOXIDE IN YOUR HOME

- Have a qualified service technician inspect all fuel-burning equipment, both furnaces and fireplaces, yearly to ensure it is operating at peak efficiency (whatever the energy source).
- If you have a hydronic heating system (boiler) fueled by natural gas, be sure to have it inspected and cleaned annually. These units can produce substantial amounts of carbon monoxide if a boiler flue passage gets blocked, creating significant health risks. Kitchener Utilities highly recommends annual inspections of these heating systems to ensure safe operation.
- Have a certified chimney contractor inspect your masonry chimney yearly for moisture stains, cracks, white chalky deposits, or loose mortar.
- Natural gas equipment needs air and to be kept clean. To operate safely, keep the area around the equipment clear. Also, consult a qualified heating contractor before making any changes to enclose or partition off your natural gas equipment.
- Keep snow and ice clear from all outside gas appliance vents, such as furnace, fireplace, and/or water heater.
- Only buy equipment that bears the seal of testing agencies such as the Canadian Standards Association (CSA). They are your assurance that the equipment is in compliance with national safety standards.
- Use a licensed gas fitter to install all equipment.
- All new natural gas equipment installations should be inspected by Kitchener Utilities. Call the Gas Service Department at 519-741-2529 and select option #2 to arrange for an inspection.

Kitchener Utilities Inspections,
Service and Repairs 519-741-2529 and select option #2
Gas Emergencies 519-741-2541
www.kitchenerutilities.ca
Check out www.safetyinfo.ca
for more home safety tips.

