

# Carbon Monoxide

## What is Carbon Monoxide?

Carbon Monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless gas that is created by burning fuel. CO prevents the body from using oxygen, which can cause damage to the heart, brain, and other organs.

## Deadly Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Every year, thousands of people are killed or seriously injured from breathing carbon monoxide. The CO comes from gas and oil appliances and heating systems in the home, and from cars and trucks running in enclosed areas. Because it is invisible and has no smell, people often do not realize that they are breathing CO.

**Common early symptoms of CO poisoning are fatigue (feeling drowsy), confusion, headaches, fainting, and dizziness. People often do not realize that they are exposed until they are seriously ill.**



## At Risk

Children, pregnant women, and people who have heart disease or breathing problems are especially vulnerable to carbon monoxide poisoning.

## Common Sources of Carbon Monoxide

If gas and oil appliances and heating systems are not installed correctly, working well, or cleaned and serviced regularly, they can be sources of CO exposure. The owner of the building is responsible for servicing and maintaining the heating system. Common sources include:

- ◆ Space heaters
- ◆ Blocked flue pipes
- ◆ Fireplaces
- ◆ Cars and trucks
- ◆ Gas ranges and oven
- ◆ Clothing dryers
- ◆ Gas and oil heating systems
- ◆ BBQ grills



## Protect Yourself from CO Poisoning.

- ◆ Install a CO detector (available at any hardware or home improvement store). Nicole's Law requires that all homes and apartments with a potential source of CO must have a working CO alarm installed in each apartment and on each occupied floor.
- ◆ Never operate any combustion engine indoors.
- ◆ Be careful not to have windows open near running cars or trucks.
- ◆ Do not warm your car up in a garage with the door closed and make sure your tailpipe isn't blocked by snow.
- ◆ Have all your heating systems and appliances inspected and cleaned yearly. Keep exhaust vents clear of snow and debris.
- ◆ Keep all oil- and gas-fired heating systems well maintained.

**If you experience symptoms, or your CO detector goes off:  
Leave immediately and call the Fire Department at 911**



Boston Public Health Commission  
1010 Massachusetts Avenue  
Boston, MA 02118  
www.bphc.org  
Barbara Ferrer, Executive Director  
Thomas M. Menino, Mayor

**Please call the Environmental Hazards  
Program for more information  
617-534-5966**