



Fire Department

Carbon Monoxide (CO) is a silent killer. It cannot be seen, smelled or tasted. It has no color or special “feel” or irritation that would alert anyone to its presence. It is one of the most lethal products of combustion found in smoke, and it can accumulate in your home to deadly levels before you know it.

How is that possible? Any burning material will give off carbon monoxide. This means furnaces, kerosene heaters, gas or wood stoves and exhaust from vehicles or equipment running in or near the home can send CO into the house. Even if used outside, a power washer or other gas-driven tool may send CO into the house through the ventilation system -an open window, an air conditioner or heat pump vent (HVAC)- leading to high levels of CO building rapidly.

Carbon monoxide is measured in **parts per million, or PPM**, in the air we breathe. At **35 PPM**, or .0035%, people experience headaches and dizziness within 6 to 8 hours of constant exposure.

At **200 PPM** (.02%), headaches occur **within 2 to 3 hours**.

At **800 PPM** (.08%), dizziness, nausea and convulsions (seizures) occur **within 45 minutes**.

At **1600 PPM** (.16%), headaches, dizziness, nausea and convulsions occur **within 20 minutes**, and death will occur **within 2 hours**.

At **3200 PPM** (.32%), headaches, dizziness etc. occur in **5 to 10 minutes**. Death will occur **within 30 minutes**.

At **6400 PPM** (.64%), Symptoms occur **within 2 minutes**, and death **within 20 minutes or less**.

At **12800 PPM** (1.28%), unconsciousness occurs **within 2 to 3 breaths**, and death within **3 minutes or less**.

This demonstrates how little Carbon monoxide it takes to make people sick to death.

What can you do to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning? The best thing to do is not to burn inside your home without proper ventilation, like a well- functioning chimney, or outside the home where fumes can be sucked into the house by HVAC equipment. If you cook or heat with gas or wood flames, the best thing to do is to install carbon monoxide detectors. These can be provided by the City of Newton Fire Department through a grant received this year. They operate like smoke detectors by warning of dangerous levels of carbon monoxide before damage to people can occur.

Recently, our neighbors in Charlotte, NC had a carbon monoxide incident. It happened at a Harris-Teeter store, and was caused by equipment with a gas powered engine being

used inside the structure. Twelve people were hospitalized from the effects of carbon monoxide. Thankfully, all of them survived. Let us not have the same thing happen in the City of Newton. Practice safe cooking and heating as well as proper ventilation of equipment, and use a **carbon monoxide detector**.

For information about detectors, call the City of Newton Fire Department Fire and Life Safety Educator's office at 695-4314.