

# Carbon monoxide safety

## Protecting yourself and your family



Rhode Island Energy™  
a PPL company

### Stay away, stay safe

The following safety information may increase your awareness and help protect you and your family from deadly carbon monoxide.

### Facts about carbon monoxide

The same substance that comes out of a car's exhaust pipe, carbon monoxide is a highly poisonous gas. Carbon monoxide is especially dangerous because it is colorless, odorless and tasteless—making it almost impossible to detect without a carbon monoxide alarm.

Carbon monoxide is produced when common fuels—such as oil, coal, natural gas, kerosene or wood—are burned incompletely. When carbon monoxide gas builds up in any enclosed area in your home, it can cause severe illness and even death.

Carbon monoxide buildup can be especially severe during the coldest weather, when houses are closed up tight and heating equipment runs much of the time.

### Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning

Because carbon monoxide poisoning can feel like the flu, it can be hard to know when you are suffering from it. If undetected, however, carbon monoxide poisoning can lead to unconsciousness and even death. Those most at risk are elderly people, children, someone who is or has been ill, and anyone who spends most of the time indoors during the winter.

Depending on how long it goes unchecked, a person exposed to carbon monoxide can feel any number of the following symptoms:

- headaches
- dizziness
- weakness
- nausea
- confusion
- sleepiness
- redness of the skin
- tightness of the chest
- fluttering of the heart
- loss of muscle control



### Important action steps

- Seek fresh air and remain outside. Take everyone with you including pets.
- Call **911** or your local fire department.
- Seek medical attention immediately.

### Common household causes

Carbon monoxide buildup can be caused when an appliance—a heating system, water heater, clothes dryer or range—isn't getting enough air or is venting improperly. Common causes of potentially hazardous conditions include:

#### Blocked ventilation

- Bird and squirrel nests, and leaves can block chimneys and keep them from venting properly. Heating equipment should also be kept free of excess lint, dust and other materials.
- Vents and exhaust ducts of appliances (such as water heaters, ranges and clothes dryers) should never be sealed shut or blocked by any debris that could keep them from working properly.

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### Insufficient household air

- A fire in an open fireplace, the prolonged use of kitchen and bathroom exhaust fans and the use of power attic vents can significantly reduce the amount of air in an enclosed home. This can cause improper combustion and result in a backup of carbon monoxide and other flue gases.

### Operating fuel-burning equipment in an enclosed area

- Fuel-burning equipment needs surrounding air in order to function properly. If you are adding walls or shelving near a heating system or water heater, take care to allow space for air flow.

If you have any questions, please contact a licensed or qualified plumbing/ heating contractor or a customer service representative.



### Preventing carbon monoxide poisoning

Here are some tips to protect your family:

- Install a UL-listed home carbon monoxide detector.
- Arrange for an annual check of your heating system by a licensed professional heating contractor. If you haven't had your heating system inspected yet, call now.
- Check chimneys or flues for debris, bird nests or other blockages, and have them cleaned periodically.

- If your furnace vents in a way other than through a chimney, make sure that the vent is clear of leaves and other debris.
- Be sure space heaters and wood burning stoves are in good condition, have adequate ventilation and are used in strict compliance with manufacturer's instructions.
  - ♦ **NEVER** use a gas range for heating, burn coal or charcoal in an enclosed space.
  - ♦ **NEVER** leave a car idling in a closed garage.
- If you use a back-up electricity generator, install it outside. Open windows do not provide sufficient ventilation to safely operate a generator indoors.

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