



OFFICE OF THE ILLINOIS STATE FIRE MARSHAL

JB Pritzker, Governor
Michele L. Pankow, State Fire Marshal

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November is National Carbon Monoxide Awareness Month

Illinois Fire Departments Responded to 9,860 related CO Calls in 2024

Springfield, Ill- The Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal (OSFM) is raising awareness during National Carbon Monoxide Awareness Month this November. The OSFM is urging everyone to recognize the silent and invisible danger of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning, which claims hundreds of lives and sickens thousands each year across the United States.

In 2024, Illinois fire departments responded to 9,860 carbon monoxide (CO) related calls across the state. According to the National Carbon Monoxide Awareness Association, emergency rooms across the U.S. see more than 100,000 visits each year due to CO exposure. Tragically, over 14,000 people are hospitalized annually, and approximately 1,200 people die each year from carbon monoxide poisoning, a number that continues to rise. Each year, hundreds of people across Illinois are treated in emergency rooms due to carbon monoxide (CO) exposure, and over the past decade, an average of 20 people per year have died from accidental CO poisoning.

“Carbon monoxide is a silent and deadly threat that can strike without warning! This threat increases during the colder months as we turn on our furnaces to stay warm,” **said Illinois State Fire Marshal Michele Pankow**. “Every home and business should have working CO alarms and ensure all fuel-burning appliances are properly maintained. Awareness, prevention, and early detection save lives so don’t wait until it’s too late.”

Carbon monoxide is a toxic gas produced by fuel-burning devices such as furnaces, generators, fireplaces, grills, and vehicles. Unlike fire, CO has no color, no odor, and no taste, making it virtually undetectable without a working alarm.

Exposure to carbon monoxide can lead to both short-term and long-term health effects. High concentrations can be fatal within minutes, while prolonged exposure to lower levels can cause serious and lasting health problems. Many states still lack requirements for CO alarms in homes, hotels, schools, and other buildings where people live, sleep, or gather — leaving countless individuals unknowingly at risk.

Symptoms of CO poisoning can include:

- Headache, nausea, vomiting
- Dizziness and confusion
- Shortness of breath
- Weakness, fatigue, or blurred vision

- Sleepiness, loss of muscle control, and unconsciousness

Protect Yourself and Your Loved Ones: Carbon Monoxide Safety Tips

- Install CO alarms: in your home, garage, shop, or man cave — especially near fuel-burning appliances and sleeping areas.
- Take a portable CO alarm when traveling: most hotels are not required to have them.
- Know the sound: CO alarms beep four times in a row; fire alarms beep three times.
- Test alarms monthly, replace batteries as needed, and follow the manufacturer's replacement schedule.
- Schedule annual inspections for furnaces, chimneys, and fireplaces.
- Use generators safely — keep them at least 20 feet from any building, using extension cords if needed. Never use them inside.
- Never heat your home with a gas oven or range.
- Ventilate your garage: Don't run vehicles inside, even with the door open. Back them out of the garage.
- Keep exhaust vents clear — including your home's appliances and your car's tailpipe.

To learn more about CO safety visit our website sfm.illinois.gov.

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