



# TOWNSHIPS TODAY

A NEWSLETTER BROUGHT  
TO YOU BY YOUR TOWNSHIP

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## A 'Silent Killer' Could Be Lurking in Your Home

Pennsylvania leads the country in the number of accidental carbon monoxide poisonings, which result in an estimated 450 deaths and more than 20,000 emergency room visits each year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports.

Here is some useful information to help you protect yourself and your loved ones against this silent AND deadly gas, which could be lurking in your home.

### Where does carbon monoxide come from?

Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless gas that often goes undetected, striking victims who least expect it, sometimes in their sleep.

This "silent killer" is produced by burning fuel in cars or trucks, small engines, stoves, lanterns, grills, fireplaces, gas ranges, portable generators, and furnaces. When the gas builds up in enclosed spaces, people or animals who breathe it can be poisoned, and ventilation does not guarantee safety.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission says about 170 people in the United States die every year from carbon monoxide produced by nonautomotive consumer products, such as room heaters, so as the weather turns colder, it's impor-



**Carbon monoxide, often called a "silent killer," is produced by burning fuel in cars or trucks, small engines, stoves, lanterns, grills, fireplaces, gas ranges, portable generators, and furnaces. A tasteless, orderless gas, it lurks in homes, threatening the people and animals who breathe it.**

tant to take extra precautions.

“Carbon monoxide is created when combustible materials burn incompletely,” Pa. State Fire Commissioner Tim Solobay says. “Carbon monoxide detectors should be tested and batteries changed, particularly as the weather turns colder and people start using things like wood stoves and gas furnaces to heat their homes.”

### Who is at risk?

Exposure to carbon monoxide can result in permanent neurological damage or death, and anyone can be at risk.

The CDC says infants, the elderly, and people with chronic heart disease, anemia, or breathing problems are more prone to illness or death. However, carbon monoxide doesn't discriminate, especially if certain conditions are present.

In July 2015, for example, four young people and a dog were found dead of carbon monoxide poisoning inside a cabin in Maine. Authorities believe they went to bed without shutting off a gas-powered generator in the basement.

### How can I prevent carbon monoxide poisoning in my home?

Winter can be a prime time for carbon monoxide poisoning as people turn on their heating systems and mistakenly warm their cars in garages.

The National Safety Council recommends that you install a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector in your home near the bedrooms. Check or replace the battery when you change the time on your clocks each spring and fall. The CDC offers these additional tips:

- Have your heating system, water heater, and any other gas- or coal-burning appliances serviced by a qualified technician every year.
- Do not use portable, flameless, chemical heaters indoors.
- Never use a generator inside your home, basement, or garage or less than 20 feet from any window, door, or vent. Fatal levels of carbon monoxide can be produced in just minutes.
- Have your chimney checked and cleaned every year and make sure your fireplace damper is open before lighting a fire and well after it is extinguished.
- Make sure your gas appliances are vented properly.
- Never use a gas oven to heat your home.
- Never let a car idle in the garage.
- Know the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning.

### The symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning

The U.S. Fire Administration has put together

**Carbon monoxide detectors are designed to measure the accumulation of the gas over time and sound the alarm when levels markedly increase.**



### Did you know?

Similar to a smoke detector, a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector can save lives.

These detectors are designed to measure the accumulation of carbon monoxide over time and sound the alarm when levels markedly increase, allowing those in the building time to safely ventilate the area with fresh air or evacuate.

materials on the dangers of carbon monoxide, including a list of poisoning symptoms.

***Low to moderate carbon monoxide poisoning is characterized by:***

- headache
- fatigue
- shortness of breath
- nausea
- dizziness

***High-level carbon monoxide poisoning results in:***

- mental confusion
- vomiting
- loss of muscular coordination and consciousness
- death

Symptom severity varies depending on the level of carbon monoxide and duration of exposure. Mild symptoms sometimes are mistaken for the flu.

### Steps to take when the carbon monoxide alarm sounds

The Consumer Product Safety Commission says never ignore a carbon monoxide alarm and don't try to find the source of the gas. Instead, follow these steps:

- immediately move outside to fresh air;
- call emergency services, the fire department, or 911;
- do a head count to make sure that everyone in the home is accounted for; and
- do not re-enter the premises until emergency responders have given you permission to do so.