

Commonwealth of Kentucky
Cabinet for Health and Family Services

Colder Temperatures Increase the Risk for Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Dec. 15 2016) - As temperatures drop and the risk for carbon monoxide poisoning increases, Kentuckians are urged to be aware of the dangers of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning due to improper use of heating or cooking devices.

Items such as kerosene or propane gas stoves and ovens have been used as alternative heat sources indoors, sometimes with tragic results. Since these devices emit a colorless, odorless gas called carbon monoxide as a by-product, improper use can lead to severe cases of carbon monoxide poisoning. The Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH), which is part of the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) advises Kentuckians to follow these steps taken from guidelines issued by the National Center for Environmental Health to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning:

- Don't use a generator, charcoal grill, camp stove or other gasoline or charcoal-burning device inside your home, basement or garage or outside near a window.
- Don't run a car or truck inside a garage attached to your house, even if you leave the door open.
- Don't use a fireplace that isn't properly vented.
- Don't heat your house with a gas oven.
- Be sure to carefully follow manufacturers' instructions for kerosene heaters, making sure the wick is set at the proper level and is clean. Ensure your kerosene heater is only operated in a well-vented area. Kerosene heaters require 1-K grade kerosene fuel and fuel should be clear, not colored or cloudy. To avoid the risk of fire, place kerosene heaters several feet away from all furniture, curtains, paper, clothes, bedding and other combustible materials. Infants, small children and pets should be kept away from heaters to avoid serious burns.
- Seek immediate medical attention if you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning and are experiencing symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning. Early symptoms include headache, nausea, vomiting and fatigue. Carbon monoxide poisoning is treatable.
- Install a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector in your home and replace the battery when you change the time on your clocks each spring and fall for daylight savings time. If the detector sounds, leave your home immediately and call 911. On average, carbon monoxide detectors should be replaced about every five years.

"Carbon monoxide is a colorless and odorless gas that can be deadly and should be taken seriously," said Hiram C. Polk, Jr. M.D., commissioner, Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH). "We urge Kentuckians to take steps to prevent exposure to carbon monoxide such as allowing adequate ventilation to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning and avoiding fire hazards."

If you are experiencing symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning, call 911 or contact the Poison Control hot line at (800) 222-1222.

More information about carbon monoxide poisoning can be found on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/co/guidelines.htm>.