

January 22, 2016

## FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IN LAKE COUNTY URGES RESIDENTS TO TAKE PRECAUTIONS TO PREVENT CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING



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**Lake County** – The Florida Department of Health in Lake County encourages residents to take precautions to prevent carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning.

Carbon monoxide poisoning is a year round threat, however as temperatures drop, the potential for CO poisonings rise due to the inappropriate use of portable heating units. CO is a highly poisonous gas produced by burning fuels such as gasoline, natural gas, propane, kerosene, charcoal and wood. CO from these sources can build up in enclosed or partially enclosed spaces. The risk of illness or death increases with the level of CO in the air and the amount of time exposed. Dangerous CO levels can result when home appliances are not properly maintained or when used incorrectly.

“Carbon Monoxide is an invisible gas that is tasteless and odorless”. “Awareness of the threat and utilizing appropriate prevention strategies is the best way to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning,” stated Aaron Kissler, Health Officer for the Florida Department of Health in Lake County.

Since symptoms of CO poisoning are similar to those of the flu, food poisoning, or other illnesses, you may not think CO poisoning is the cause. The common signs and symptoms include headache, nausea, weakness, abdominal discomfort/pain, dizziness and confusion. Other signs and symptoms may include blurred vision, numbness and tingling, ataxia (loss or lack of muscular coordination), irritability, agitation, chest pain, shortness of breath, palpitations, seizures and loss of consciousness.

Anyone who suspects symptoms of CO poisoning should go outside the home or building without delay and seek prompt medical attention. If a person has collapsed or is not breathing, call 911 for emergency medical assistance immediately from a safer location such as outside or from a neighbor’s home. Children, pregnant women and individuals with heart conditions are most vulnerable.

### Tips to help prevent CO poisoning:

- Never use a gas stove or oven to heat the home.
- Never burn charcoal inside a house, garage, vehicle or tent, including in a fireplace.

- Avoid using unvented gas, propane or kerosene heaters in enclosed spaces, especially in sleeping areas.
- Install and use fuel-burning appliances according to manufacturer instructions, the Florida Building Code and the Florida Fire Prevention Code.
- Inspect the exhaust system of each fuel burning appliance every year, including chimneys, flues and vents. Check for blockage, holes and disconnections.
- Have fuel-burning appliances inspected and serviced annually by a licensed contractor.
- Never leave an automobile running in a garage, even with the garage door open.
- Do not leave the rear window or tailgate of a vehicle open while driving. CO from the exhaust can be pulled inside the car, van or camper.
- Never use a portable generator or a fuel-powered tool indoors or in other enclosed or partially enclosed areas.
- Always place portable generators outdoors on a dry surface far away from doors, windows, vents and air-conditioning equipment that could allow CO to enter. Orient the generator so that it is placed with the exhaust port pointing away from the home.
- Install battery operated CO alarms or plug-in CO alarms with battery backup inside a house according to manufacturer's installation instructions or NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) 720: Standard for the Installation of Carbon Monoxide (CO) Detection and Warning Equipment.
- Install only CO alarms that meet the UL (Underwriter Laboratories) 2034 or the CSA (Canadian Standards Association) 6.19 standards.
- Replace CO alarm batteries once a year and test alarms frequently.
- Replace CO alarms every five years or as often as recommended by the alarm manufacturer.

CO poisoning is a reportable disease and all suspect cases need to be reported to the Florida Department of Health in Lake County at 352-771-5500.

### **About the Florida Department of Health**

The department works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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