



### **For Immediate Release:**

January 14, 2022

### ***Extremely cold temperatures are ahead. What you need to know to protect yourself from carbon monoxide poisoning.***

With the onset of winter temperatures and the potential for snow and ice the Palmetto Poison Center is issuing a warning about the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning. The risk of poisoning can increase throughout the state as individuals try to remain warm. Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless, tasteless toxic gas. It is produced when any fuel such as natural gas, propane, gasoline, kerosene, wood, or charcoal is burned. Carbon monoxide can build up in enclosed and semi-enclosed spaces, and the results can be deadly. Since carbon monoxide cannot be seen, tasted, or smelled, it can kill quickly or slowly when breathed in. Carbon monoxide can also cause permanent damage to the brain and other parts of the nervous system. People of all ages can be affected, but infants and children are the most vulnerable. Some potential sources that produce carbon monoxide are: gas water heaters, gas stoves and ovens, kerosene heaters, grills, wood and gas fireplaces, portable generators, and automobile engines.

#### **Symptoms**

The symptoms of CO poisoning are similar to the flu or food poisoning. They can include:

- Fatigue/sleepiness
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Headache
- Irregular breathing
- Confusion or disorientation

#### **Prevention**

- Never use fuel-burning equipment (grills, stoves, kerosene heaters, lanterns, generators, lawn mowers, etc.) in enclosed/poorly ventilated spaces (tent, garage, basement, boat cabin, etc.).
- Follow manufacturer's instructions for safe operation of fuel-burning appliances.

- A qualified technician should check gas-burning appliances (including hot water heaters and gas dryers) annually.
- Install a UL-approved CO alarm on every level of the home containing sleeping quarters. *An alarm is not a substitute for proper use and maintenance of fuel-burning appliances.*
- Post the poison hotline number (1-800-222-1222) near phones. Call immediately for possible poisonings, or for poison prevention advice. It is better to ask questions now, than to be sorry later.

**If The CO Alarm Goes Off:**

- Check to see if any member of the household is experiencing symptoms.
- If they are, leave the affected area immediately and get fresh air.
- If no one is feeling symptoms, open windows/doors and turn off potential sources of CO.
- Have a qualified technician inspect fuel-burning appliances to identify and correct source of leak.

One carbon monoxide exposure in our state is one too many and prevention is key. The Palmetto Poison Center is staffed by trained nurses and pharmacists who can provide expert information for poison related emergencies and information. The Center provides services to over 5 million residents in all 46 counties of South Carolina. Services are free, confidential and available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. To contact the Palmetto Poison Center, call 1-800-222-1222. Please visit their website at [poison.sc.edu](http://poison.sc.edu) for free materials or follow the center on Facebook “Palmetto Poison Center.”