



# Clallam County Fire District 3

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Motto: *Serve, Respect,  
Prevent and Protect*

## Carbon Monoxide (CO) Frequently Asked Questions

### What is carbon monoxide?

- ◆ Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless and tasteless poison gas that can kill a person at low levels of exposure in just minutes. CO inhibits the body's ability to transfer oxygen to the blood supply, resulting in injury to vital organs.

### What do I do? Who should I call if my CO alarm goes off?

- ◆ NEVER ignore a carbon monoxide alarm.
- ◆ If anyone is experiencing symptoms, get EVERYONE to fresh air and call 911 from a neighbor's home.
- ◆ If no one is experiencing symptoms, you should call the fire department or a qualified technician from a neighbor's home to have the problem inspected.
- ◆ If you are unable to leave the home to call for help, open the doors and windows, and turn off all possible sources while waiting for assistance to arrive.

### How is carbon monoxide produced?

- ◆ CO is a byproduct of incomplete combustion. Any time something is burning, CO is a byproduct and is likely to be present. CO can be produced from burning fuels such as petroleum products (gasoline, diesel, propane, natural gas, and oil), wood, plastics, or other combustible materials.
- ◆ CO can quickly build up to unsafe levels within enclosed or semi-enclosed areas; even within rooms where windows or doors are open.

### What are some common sources of carbon monoxide?

- ◆ Generators used in garages or placed near air intakes, or adjacent to housing, and charcoal or gas (LPG, CNG, kerosene) grills or stoves used indoors during power outages, are common sources of CO poisoning. Vehicles should not be left running inside attached garages.
- ◆ Blocked flues and fireplace chimneys, backdrafts and air pressure issues allowing fumes to enter the residence instead of exiting via the chimney are common problems year around.
- ◆ Any improperly installed or malfunctioning fuel-burning appliance can produce CO. Cracked or loose fitting in furnace exchangers may also contribute to the risk of CO exposure.
- ◆ Gas clothes dryers, water heaters, gas range/stoves, wood burning stoves, and portable fuel-burning space heaters, are often overlooked as potential sources of CO.

**What are some of the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning?**

- ◆ Symptoms of CO exposure range from mild to extreme. Initial symptoms may appear very similar to flu – but without a fever. Dizziness, severe headaches, nausea, sleepiness, fatigue or weakness, and disorientation or confusion are common symptoms.

**What are the effects of carbon monoxide poisoning?**

- ◆ Slight or mild headache, nausea, vomiting, fatigue, and flu-like symptoms are common effects of mild exposure to carbon monoxide.
- ◆ With moderate exposure, symptoms may increase to include a throbbing headache, drowsiness, confusion, and/or a fast heart rate.
- ◆ Extreme exposure may cause mental confusion, loss of muscular coordination, convulsions, loss of consciousness, brain damage, resulting in heart and lung failure, followed by death.
- ◆ If you experience even mild CO poisoning symptoms, immediately consult a physician!

**What steps can I take to prevent exposure to carbon monoxide?**

- ◆ Make sure your home has a properly functioning CO alarm installed on every level and located immediately outside sleeping areas.
- ◆ If the home's heating system uses a combustible fuel, have the system, vents, chimney, and flue inspected annually by a qualified technician.
- ◆ When purchasing new appliances, confirm they have been tested and approved by a nationally recognized testing laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratory™.
- ◆ Always install and operate appliances following the manufacturer's instructions.
- ◆ Check heating system vents and chimneys for improper connections, visible rust and stains at least annually.
- ◆ Never try to heat a room or home using the home's gas range/stove.
- ◆ Do not allow cars to idle in an attached or enclosed garage. Do not use fuel-powered appliances or tools within enclosed areas such as garages or porches.