



Michigan Department of Health & Human Services

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MDHHS CONTACT: Chelsea Wuth, 517-241-2112, WuthC@michigan.gov

LARA CONTACT: Matthew Erickson, 517-335-5272, MediaInfo@michigan.gov

MDHHS and LARA remind Michiganders to check their carbon monoxide detectors as cold weather hits

LANSING, MI – As the temperatures continue to drop and Michigan prepares to turn back the clocks on Nov. 7 for Daylight Saving Time, Michiganders are urged to take action to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.

Carbon monoxide, or CO, is a gas that forms whenever a fossil fuel is burned. You cannot see, taste or smell CO, but it can be deadly when you breathe it in. CO is dangerous because it blocks your body from taking in the oxygen it needs. CO can cause serious illness or death in just minutes.

“Taking small steps like making sure you have a working carbon monoxide detector can make a huge difference if you’re unknowingly exposed,” said Dr. Natasha Bagdasarian, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services chief medical executive. “Symptoms of carbon monoxide exposure include flu-like symptoms – aches, dizziness, fatigue and nausea. If you think you have been exposed it is important to get into an area with fresh air immediately and seek medical attention.”

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports that each year, approximately 50,000 people across the country visit the emergency department for accidental carbon monoxide poisoning. In 2019, the latest year data were available from the MDHHS Michigan Environmental Public Health Tracking Program (MiTracking), there were 1,090 Michigan emergency department visits for carbon monoxide poisoning.

“Carbon monoxide is produced by many items people use daily,” said State Fire Marshal Kevin Sehlmeier. “Furnaces, water heaters, dryers, lanterns, space heaters, fireplaces, chimneys and gas stoves all produce this colorless, odorless, tasteless and poisonous gas known as the ‘Invisible Killer’ which requires an electronic sensor to detect. Michigan residents should install an inexpensive CO detector on each level of your home and test them every month with your smoke alarm.”

Hospitalizations for carbon monoxide poisoning are preventable when people are prepared.

To protect from carbon monoxide, [follow these safety tips:](#)

- **Make sure you have working carbon monoxide detectors.** Detectors on every level of your home, including the basement, are strongly recommended. Detectors can be purchased at most hardware and big box stores. Daylight Saving Time is a good time each year to replace the batteries in your detector and push the “Test” button to be sure it’s working properly. Replace your detector every five years or according to manufacturer’s instructions. Use a battery-powered detector where you have fuel burning devices but no electric outlets, such as in tents, cabins, RVs and boats with enclosed cabins.
- **Have your furnace or wood-burning stove inspected annually.** Hire a professional to make sure it is functionally sound and vents properly outside the home.
- **Never run a gasoline, kerosene or propane heater or a grill (gas or charcoal) inside your home or in an unventilated garage.** Any heating system that burns fuel produces carbon monoxide.
- **Generators should be run at a safe distance (at least 20 feet) from the home.** Never run a generator in the home or garage or right next to windows or doors.
- **Never run a car in an enclosed space.** If a vehicle is running, you must have a garage door open to the outside.

Symptoms of overexposure to carbon monoxide include headache, fatigue, dizziness, shortness of breath, nausea and confusion. At high levels, carbon monoxide can cause death within minutes. If you suspect you may be experiencing carbon monoxide poisoning, or your detector sounds an alarm, head outside immediately for fresh air and call 911.

In addition, Michiganders are reminded to install smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors on every floor in your home, push the button to test them regularly, change all alarm batteries every 6 months, and replace alarms after 10 years.

Visit [Michigan.gov/MiTracking](https://www.michigan.gov/MiTracking) for more information about carbon monoxide poisoning.

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- [CO Awareness Week.pdf](#)
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