



Vilas County Public Health Department

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Properly Working Carbon Monoxide Detectors save Lives

Vilas County Public Health Department would like to remind residents to take steps to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning. “As colder weather arrives, we start seeing more carbon monoxide poisonings,” said Amy Springer, RS, Environmental Health Specialist, Vilas County Public Health Department. “Now is the time for residents to make sure their heating sources and carbon monoxide detectors are in good working order.”

In Vilas County, the rate of emergency room visits for carbon monoxide poisoning is 17.5 (per 100,000 people). Wisconsin’s rate is 7.9 (source: Wisconsin Environmental Public Health Tracking Program). The data shows that Vilas County’s rate is more than two times that of the State’s. These trips to the emergency room for carbon monoxide poisoning are preventable when people are prepared!

To protect yourself and your family from carbon monoxide, follow these safety tips:

Make sure you have working carbon monoxide detectors. All homes and duplexes in Wisconsin are required to have detectors on every level, including the basement, but not the attic or storage areas. Detectors can be bought at most hardware stores for \$20 to \$50. Check your batteries and replace at least once a year. Push the “Test” button to be sure it’s working properly. Replace your detector every five years.

Have your furnace or wood-burning stove inspected annually. Hire a professional to make sure it is working properly and vents properly outside the home.

Never run a gasoline or propane heater or a grill (gas or charcoal) inside your home, cabin, or in an unventilated garage. Any heating system that burns fuel produces carbon monoxide. 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.

Generators should be run at a safe distance (at least 20 feet) from the home. Never run a generator in the home, cabin, or garage, or right next to windows or doors.

Never run a car in an enclosed space. If a vehicle is running, you must open a door to the outside.

At high levels, carbon monoxide can cause death within minutes. Symptoms of overexposure to carbon monoxide include headache, fatigue, dizziness, shortness of

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breath, nausea, and confusion. If you think you may be experiencing carbon monoxide poisoning, or your detector sounds an alarm, head outside immediately for fresh air and call 911.

Visit the Wisconsin Department of Health Services website:

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/air/co.htm> for more information about carbon monoxide poisoning. To learn more about the Wisconsin carbon monoxide detector requirements, visit the Department of Safety and Professional Services' website: <http://dsps.wi.gov/sb/docs/SB-UdcAlarmsFeb11.pdf>

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