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CHECK YOUR FURNACE AND OBSERVE OTHER TIPS TO AVOID CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

MORGANTOWN, WV – (DECEMBER 18, 2017)

Can carbon monoxide replace oxygen in the blood? Can you smell carbon monoxide? Is it OK to heat your home with your gas range if your electricity goes out?

Now that winter is here, the Monongalia County Health Department wants to remind folks that it’s time to take additional steps to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning. You can start out with a quiz from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (Hint: Answers to the above questions are, yes, carbon monoxide can replace oxygen in the blood, and no, you can’t smell it and you shouldn’t heat your home with your gas range).

Carbon monoxide is found in fumes produced any time you burn fuel in cars or trucks, small engines, stoves, lanterns, grills, fireplaces, portable generators, gas ranges or furnaces. It can build up indoors and poison people and animals who breathe it.

This, of course, becomes more of an issue in the winter as we heat our homes during the cold weather. It’s imperative to take steps to keep you and your family and pets safe.

To avoid carbon monoxide poisoning, have your furnace inspected each year. Install carbon monoxide detectors in your home and replace the batteries every six months.

It’s also important to avoid situations that could allow carbon monoxide levels to build up in your home. When power outages occur after severe weather, such as winter storms, using alternative sources of power can cause carbon monoxide to build up in a home and poison the people and animals inside. Never use a generator, grill, camp stove or other gasoline, propane, natural gas or charcoal-burning devices inside a home, garage, basement, crawlspace or any partially enclosed area.
Carbon monoxide can be a hazard year-round. Running a car in an attached garage allows carbon monoxide to build up in a home. It also can be a factor on larger boats, such as houseboats, that sometimes have generators that vent toward the rear of the boat.

The most common symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, chest pain and confusion.

Here are some facts about carbon monoxide poisoning:

- Every year, at least 430 people die in the U.S. from accidental carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Approximately 50,000 people in the U.S. visit hospital emergency departments each year due to accidental carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Red blood cells pick up carbon monoxide quicker than they pick up oxygen.
- People who are sleeping or who have been drinking alcohol can die from carbon monoxide poisoning before ever having symptoms.

If you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning, get all people and pets out of the house and consult a health care professional.

For more information, check out cdc.gov/dotw/carbonmonoxide/index.html.

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