



Twenty-five states have statutes that require carbon monoxide (CO) detectors in certain residential buildings – Nebraska is not one of them.

Carbon monoxide is a gas produced when fuels burn incompletely. It has no color, taste or smell. The major causes of carbon monoxide poisoning include:

- Using heating equipment that is in poor repair
- Lack of ventilation in a car
- Using a charcoal grill indoors
- Using unvented space heaters

Each year, carbon monoxide poisoning kills nearly 500 people nationwide and sends over 15,000 to the emergency room. The carbon monoxide death rate is highest among people greater than 65 years of age. Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning resemble those associated with other health conditions that are common among the elderly, especially in the winter.

The Centers for Disease Control ranked **Nebraska** as the state with the highest reliable mortality rate from carbon monoxide. In 2011, the Nebraska Regional Poison Center received 268 calls concerning carbon monoxide. But this figure is misleading because carbon monoxide poisoning is under-reported. It is imperative that the citizens of Nebraska understand the dangers, the symptoms and how to prevent poisoning from carbon monoxide.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include sleepiness, headache, dizziness, blurred vision, nausea, shortness of breath and convulsions. The first step in treating carbon monoxide poisoning is getting the victim to fresh air. Then seek medical attention immediately.

The Poison Center offers the following suggestions to help prevent carbon monoxide poisoning:

- Inspect all fuel-burning equipment yearly.
- Vent fuel-burning heaters to the outside.
- Do not use a gas range or an oven for heating a room.
- Never use a charcoal grill or hibachi inside.
- Install carbon monoxide alarms on every level of your home.
- Never leave a car running in an attached garage, even with the garage door open.
- Have vehicle muffler and tailpipes checked regularly.

The Nebraska Regional Poison Center offers tips on carbon monoxide poisoning prevention as a free community service. If you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning or if you have any questions, contact the Nebraska Regional Poison Center toll-free at 1-800-222-1222.