



A Silent Killer

The Nebraska Poison Center experienced a nearly 13% increase in calls concerning carbon monoxide poisonings between 2014 and 2015. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there are more than 400 deaths and approximately 15,000 emergency room visits each year as a result of carbon monoxide poisoning. The highest percentage of carbon monoxide exposures occur during the winter months of November, December, January and February. The coldest temperatures of the winter have yet to arrive.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ranked **Nebraska** as one of the states with the highest mortality rate from carbon monoxide. 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, vomiting, 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.

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

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 the vehicle muffler and tailpipes checked regularly.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning resemble those associated with other health conditions that are common among the elderly, especially in the winter. The carbon monoxide death rate is highest among people greater than 65 years of age.

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.