

## **Carbon Monoxide Law Aims to Save Lives**

The Illinois General Assembly has passed and Governor Rod Blagojevich has signed a new law mandating carbon monoxide detectors in Illinois residences. This new law requires any Illinois residence with fossil fuel-burning appliances, such as gas-powered furnaces or water heaters, or with an attached garage, to install a carbon monoxide alarm within 15 feet of all sleeping areas by January 1, 2007. Illinois is the eleventh state to enact such a law.

Carbon monoxide is an invisible, tasteless and odorless gas that kills about 200 people in the United States every year. Most deaths occur during the winter heating season. Some 15,000 Americans seek medical attention or lose at least a day of normal activity every year due to carbon monoxide poisoning, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

“Carbon monoxide can kill you before you are even aware it's in your home,” explains Michael Wahl, MD, managing medical director of the Illinois Poison Center. “We fully support this new law as a way to save lives from this devastating poisoning risk.”

Carbon monoxide comes from gas furnaces, stoves, fireplaces and water heaters and it can be produced from gas-powered tools (e.g., snow blowers, lawn mowers) and vehicles.

### **Signs and Symptoms of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning**

Early symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning — including headache, nausea, vomiting and dizziness — can mimic the flu or other illnesses. More significant poisoning symptoms also can include throbbing headaches, drowsiness, confusion and heart irregularities.

Severe poisonings can cause convulsions, unconsciousness, brain damage and even death. Carbon monoxide poisoning usually occurs slowly over a period of several hours; however, at very high concentrations, carbon monoxide can kill in minutes.

## Stay Safe from Carbon Monoxide

- Install carbon monoxide detectors on every floor of your home. You can find carbon monoxide detectors at most discount and hardware stores.
- Have your furnace, vents and fireplace inspected each fall by a professional.
- Do not use an oven or gas stovetop to heat your home.
- Do not leave a space heater running, or leave the stove or fireplace burning while you are sleeping.
- When you run a gas-powered lawn mower or tool, make sure there is good air flow.
- Never let your car run in the garage, even if the garage door is open.

## How Carbon Monoxide Detectors Work

Carbon monoxide detectors function like smoke detectors. They detect carbon monoxide gas and sound early warning alarms before the gas levels becomes debilitating, either from higher concentrations of carbon monoxide over a short period, or lower levels over a longer period.