

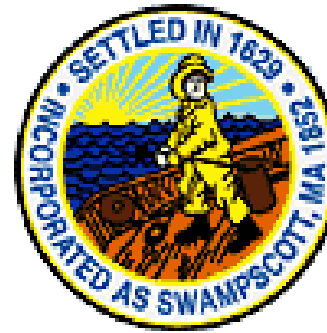
Carbon Monoxide and Your Home

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless gas created when a fuel is burned. Common fuels include natural gas, propane, gasoline and wood. Since CO has no smell or taste, you cannot detect the gas with your senses. Dangerous concentrations of CO can build up indoors and cause illness before you realize you are being poisoned. Symptoms of CO poisoning are very similar to the flu and this may cause you to ignore the early signs of poisoning.

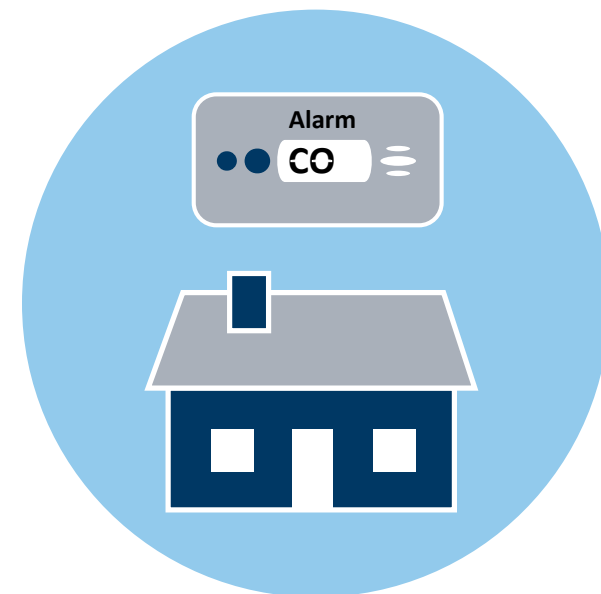
Each year, accidental CO poisoning causes on average:

- 400 deaths in the U.S.

The good news is that carbon monoxide poisoning can be prevented with simple actions such as installing a CO alarm in your home. The following will explain the causes and health effects of CO exposure and explain ways to maintain your home. You can prevent CO poisoning and keep your family safe.



In the wake of the recent tragedy in our neighboring community, the Swampscott Fire Department and Town of Swampscott would like to share some important and potentially life-saving information related to carbon monoxide safety.




Sources of CO in Your Home

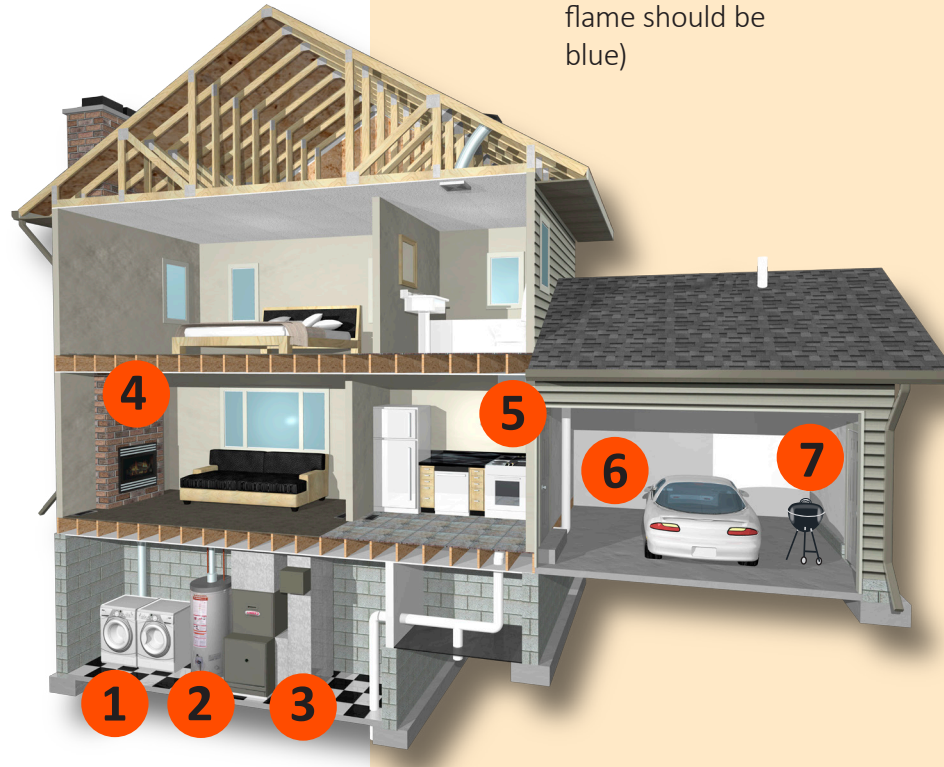
CO is produced whenever a fuel burns.



Types of fuel include:

-  Natural gas
-  Propane
-  Gasoline
-  Wood

Homes with fuel burning appliances and homes with attached garages are more likely to have CO problems.



Signs appliances are not venting properly

- Streaks of soot around appliances
- Orange or yellow flame in pilot lights or gas burners (the flame should be blue)
- No upward draft in chimney
- Excess moisture
- Rusting flue pipes

Properly maintain fuel burning appliances and vent them to the outside air.

Potential CO sources:

1. Clothes dryers (gas)
2. Water heaters
3. Furnaces and boilers
4. Fireplaces
5. Gas stoves
6. Cars
7. Grills, generators and power tools

Know the Symptoms of CO Poisoning

CO is often called the “silent killer” because the symptoms of CO poisoning are very similar to the flu. This means that many people will ignore the early signs and let the poisoning get worse.

For most people, the first signs of exposure include:

- Headache
- Breathlessness with mild exercise
- Dizziness
- Fatigue
- Nausea



Symptoms can progress to:

- Confusion and irritability
- Impaired judgment and loss of coordination
- Unconsciousness

There are some signs that it is CO poisoning and not the flu:

- You feel better when you are away from home
- Symptoms appear or seem to get worse when using fuel-burning equipment
- Everyone is sick at the same time (the flu virus usually spreads from person to person)
- No fever, no body aches, no swollen lymph nodes

Anyone can become sick and die from CO poisoning when exposed at very high levels.

CO Alarms

On March 31, 2006, "Nicole's Law" went into effect requiring CO detectors in all Massachusetts homes with potential sources of CO – those with fossil-fuel burning equipment or enclosed parking areas. "Nicole's Law" was named for 7-year old Nicole Garofalo who died on January 28, 2005 when the furnace vents of her Plymouth home were blocked by snow drifts causing deadly amounts of CO to build up in the house. The regulations (527 CMR 31.00) establish requirements for the type, location, maintenance, and inspection of CO alarms.



CO alarms do not last forever

Most alarms need to be replaced every 5 – 7 years. Look at the owner's manual to see the recommended replacement schedule.

If the CO alarm sounds:

- Go outside to fresh air.
- Make sure everyone is accounted for.
- Call the fire department or 9-1-1.

Generators Etc.

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. Keep these devices outdoors, away from doors, windows and vents that could allow carbon monoxide to come indoors.

Furnaces/Boilers

CO poisonings occur more often in the winter months and one of the largest contributors is home heating equipment. Have your furnace or boiler checked by a qualified heating contractor once a year, this includes having an annual tune-up. Not only is this important to maintain your equipment, but the contractor will look for potential CO problems.

