**Winter Brings Increase Carbon Monoxide Poisonings**

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OKLAHOMA CITY – As winter weather moves into Oklahoma and people begin to use their furnaces and fireplaces, calls to the Oklahoma Center for Poison and Drug Information about carbon monoxide poisoning will increase.

Since October 1st, specialists answering the Poison Helpline have responded to five calls for carbon monoxide exposure. “Heaters, fireplaces, and water heaters experience wear and tear, just like every other part of a house,” advises Poison Center Assistant Managing Director, Kristie Edelen. “Now is the time

to have them checked out by a professional to make sure you and your family stay safe this winter.” “Maybe the cost of a service call or a repair is too expensive, people will occasionally attempt to heat their home with grills or stoves,” Edelen added. “This is extremely dangerous; there is no way these

attempts at heating can be made safe.”

Carbon monoxide is found in fumes produced any time fuel is burned in gas furnaces, ranges or water heaters, cars or trucks, small engines, stoves, lanterns and grills. Proper ventilation is essential when any of these are used, and damage to or blockage of chimneys, vents or exhaust can cause carbon

monoxide to build up indoors.

The most common early signs of poisoning due to carbon monoxide are headache, dizziness, weakness, upset stomach, vomiting, chest pain and confusion.

Severe symptoms include:

* Fainting
* Confusion
* Irregular heartbeat
* Coma
* Seizures
* Stopping breathing
* Heart attack

Any person exposed to carbon monoxide who has anything more than minor symptoms should see a doctor right away. **Anyone suspecting carbon monoxide poisoning should get to fresh air immediately, and then call the poison center at** **1-800-222-1222**.

Combination smoke/carbon monoxide detectors should be placed near the ceiling to ensure smoke is detected. A detector should not be placed within 15 inches of heating or cooking appliances or in a humid area, such as the bathroom.

**If your detector begins to sound—**

* Everyone should leave the house.
* Go to a doctor right away if anyone has had moderate or severe symptoms, has a history of heart problems, is pregnant, or if an infant has been exposed.
* Call your local gas company, fire department or appliance repair service to come and find the source of the carbon monoxide.
* **DO NOT GO BACK INSIDE** until the source of carbon monoxide has been identified and shut off or repaired.

Pharmacists and registered nurses at the Poison Center are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week at (800) 222-1222. Please do not email the poison center or a member of the poison center staff, as poisoning emergencies are not handled through email. The Oklahoma Center for Poison and Drug Information is a program of the University of Oklahoma College of Pharmacy at the OU Health Sciences Center. For more information, log on to [www.oklahomapoison.org](http://www.oklahomapoison.org).

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