

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer has proclaimed Oct. 26-Nov. 1 as Carbon Monoxide Safety and Awareness Week in Michigan.

What is CO?

Carbon monoxide (CO), aka the “Invisible Killer,” is an odorless, colorless, tasteless and poisonous gas produced by the improper operation or ventilation of fuel-burning appliances, such as furnaces, water heaters, ovens, fireplaces, fuel space heaters, generators, charcoal grills and vehicles. This includes all fuels, such as oil, propane, natural gas, wood, kerosene, gasoline and diesel.

Each year, more than 140 people are hospitalized in Michigan due to CO poisoning, with more than 400 dying each year across the U.S. At Consumers Energy, our top priority is always safety. We want to help protect Michigan residents by educating them about CO signs and symptoms and how to take action to protect themselves by installing audible CO alarms.

Where does CO poisoning occur?

CO poisoning can occur almost anywhere – homes, businesses, RVs, cabins, boats, even deer blinds and ice shanties. Often CO poisoning occurs when appliances aren’t operating properly. But improper ventilation, such as leaving a vehicle or power lawn equipment running inside a garage (even with the door open), operating a portable generator inside a home or garage, or using fuel-burning space heaters in an enclosed space can create CO.

What are the signs of CO?

Signs of CO poisoning often mimic the flu and include headache, dizziness, nausea/vomiting, fatigue, shortness of breath, confusion and stinging/burning of the eyes. Prolonged exposure can cause loss of consciousness and death. High concentrations of CO can kill in less than five minutes.

Suspect a CO issue?

If you experience any CO symptoms and suspect a problem, leave the building immediately, call 9-1-1 for medical attention and stay out of the building until the problem has been corrected.

Protect yourself

The best defense against CO poisoning is to install/have a UL-listed audible CO alarm on every level of your home, business, on boats, even in ice shanties and deer blinds if using fuel-burning heaters. If a CO problem occurs it will alert you via a loud alarm.

Learn more about carbon monoxide safety at www.ConsumersEnergy.com/cosafety [consumersenergy.com]