

November - Carbon Monoxide Awareness Month



Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless, and tasteless gas often called the “**silent killer**” because it is **impossible to detect without an alarm** and can be fatal if inhaled in high concentrations. The risk of CO poisoning rises in the winter months when people use fuel-burning appliances, heaters, furnaces, and generators more frequently. These devices, if improperly ventilated or maintained, can emit CO, leading to symptoms such as headaches, nausea, dizziness, weakness, and in severe cases, unconsciousness or death.

Awareness and Prevention Efforts

Take preventive measures, such as installing **CO alarms on every level of the home, testing them monthly, and having fuel-burning appliances inspected annually**. Safe practices include proper generator placement and ventilation when using stoves or heaters.

Cars are one of the most common sources of carbon monoxide poisoning, and **yes, a running vehicle can produce enough of the gas to kill you in minutes** under the wrong conditions. The engine burns fuel, and when that combustion is incomplete, carbon monoxide flows out of the tailpipe. In an enclosed or partially enclosed space, concentrations can climb to lethal levels faster than most people realize.

The single most dangerous scenario is running a car inside a closed or poorly ventilated garage. A single-car garage has a small volume of air, and a running engine fills that space with carbon monoxide remarkably fast. ventilation turned off, far exceeding safety thresholds set by the World Health Organization and U.S. air quality standards.

Even with exhaust ventilation running, CO levels in the study still exceeded safe limits. That finding matters because many people assume cracking a garage door or having a vent fan running is enough. It often is not, at least not fast enough to keep up with the output of an idling engine. The advice to **never run a car inside a garage**, even with the door partially open, exists for good reason. **Attached garages are especially risky because CO can drift through interior doors and into the rest of the house while everyone is asleep.**