



Commonwealth of Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Take Steps to Prevent Carbon Monoxide Poisoning *Properly working home heating devices and carbon monoxide detectors save lives*

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Jan. 12, 2021) – With recent winter temperatures below freezing, the Kentucky Department for Public Health (KDPH), an agency within the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS), wants to remind residents to take action to prevent carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning.

“As we move into the winter months, cold weather and weather-related power outages are more likely to result in Kentuckians using generators and gas grills to provide heat. CO created by these heat sources is odorless and deadly so it is important to follow proper safety precautions and use CO detectors to keep our families safe. Working together, we can keep ourselves and our loved ones informed and safe while keeping warm this winter,” said Dr. Steven Stack, KDPH commissioner.

Since 2011, Kentucky law has required CO detectors in newly constructed one and two-family dwellings, townhomes less than three stories, apartment buildings, dormitories, adult/child care facilities and assisted living facilities that contain a fuel-burning-appliance or an attached garage.

In Kentucky, CO poisoning sends an average of 217 people per year to the emergency room, according to data from the [Kentucky's Environmental Public](#)

[Health Tracking Program](#). Data from the [National Environmental Public Health Tracking Program](#) tells us that from 2014-2018 an average of 16 Kentuckians die every year from unintentional CO poisoning. These deaths and trips to the emergency room for CO poisoning are preventable when people are prepared. DPH's mission is to improve the health and safety of people in Kentucky through prevention, promotion and protection. Officials at DPH strongly encourage residents to follow these guidelines below to prevent injury, illness or death:

Carbon Monoxide Safety

- Make sure you have working CO detectors. Be sure to replace the batteries in your detector yearly and push the "Test" button to make certain it is working properly. Replace your detector every five years or according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Have your furnace or wood-burning stove inspected annually. Hire a professional to make sure it is functionally sound and vents properly outside the home.
- Never run a gasoline or propane heater or grill (gas or charcoal) inside your home or in an unventilated garage. Any heating system that burns fuel produces CO. Use a battery-powered detector where you have fuel-burning devices but no electric outlets, such as in tents, cabins, RVs, hunting blinds and boats with enclosed cabins.
- Generators should be run at a safe distance (at least 20-25 feet) from the home. Never run a generator in the home or garage, or right next to windows or doors.
- Never run a car in an enclosed space. If a vehicle is running, you must have a door open to the outside.

At high levels, CO can cause death within minutes. Symptoms of overexposure to CO include headache, fatigue, dizziness, shortness of breath, nausea and confusion. If you suspect you may be experiencing CO poisoning, or your detector sounds an alarm, head outside immediately for fresh air and call 911.

More information about CO poisoning can be found on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website at <https://www.cdc.gov/co/default.htm> and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission at <https://www.cpsc.gov/s3fs-public/464.pdf>

Kentucky's Environmental Public Health Tracking Network (EPHTN) was created in 2002 and is one of 26 CDC funded sites. With this funding, Kentucky has created a robust health and environmental data portal that informs consumers, communities, public health practitioners, researchers and policy makers on chronic diseases and related environmental hazards and population exposures. Kentucky's data portal, EnviroHealthLink.org has Kentucky specific information on such topics as [radon](#), [social vulnerability](#), [injury and mortality](#), [air](#) and [water quality](#), [COVID Community Vulnerability Index](#), and much more. This data can be used for research, grant writing, student project/papers, strategic planning, needs assessments. Curious about the health in your county? Check out [Community Snapshot Reports](#). Kentucky health or environmental data can be found at EnviroHealthLink.org or via email at chfs.kyephtn@ky.gov.

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The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state's human services and health care programs, including the Department for Medicaid Services, the Department for Community Based Services the Department for Public Health, the Department for Aging and Independent Living and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.