CAMPUS FIRE FACTS

CARBON MONOXIDE

Carbon Monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless toxic gas produced by fuel-burning appliances used without the proper ventilation and is the leading cause of accidental poisoning in the United States. CO poisoning kills over 500 people each year and sends nearly 20,000 victims to the hospital for treatment.

According to the NFPA, in 2005 fire departments responded to over 61,000 carbon monoxide incidents. UL.com states 67% of American households use fuel-burning appliances and equipment, such as gas, wood and kerosene that can emit dangerous levels of CO into their home. But while the majority of consumers use these types of appliances, only 29% have CO alarms installed in their home.

- Have a qualified technician inspect fuel-burning appliances at least once each year. Fuel-burning appliances such as furnaces, hot water heaters and stoves require yearly maintenance. Over time, components can become damaged or deteriorate. A qualified technician can identify and repair problems with your fuel-burning appliances.
- Be alert to the danger signs that signal a CO problem: streaks of carbon or soot around the service door of your fuel-burning appliances; the absence of a draft in your chimney; excessive rusting on flue pipes or appliance jackets; moisture collecting on the windows and walls of furnace rooms; fallen soot from the fireplace; small amounts of water leaking from the base of the chimney, vent or flue pipe; damaged or discolored bricks at the top of your chimney and rust on the portion of the vent pipe visible from outside your home.
- Be aware that CO poisoning may be the cause of flu-like symptoms such as headaches, tightness of chest, dizziness, fatigue, confusion and breathing difficulties. Because CO poisoning often causes a victim's blood pressure to rise, the victim's skin may take on a pink or red cast.
- Install a UL Listed CO detector outside sleeping areas. A UL Listed CO detector will sound an alarm before dangerous levels of CO accumulate. CO indicator cards and other devices are also intended to detect elevated levels of CO, but most are not equipped with an audible alarm, and cannot wake you at night, when most CO poisonings occur.
- Read the manufacturer's instructions carefully before installing a CO detector. Do not place the detector within five feet of household chemicals. If your detector is wired directly into your home's electrical system, you should test it monthly. If your unit operates off of a battery, test the detector weekly and replace the battery at least once a year.
- Avoid placing your detector directly on top of or directly across from fuel-burning appliances. These appliances will emit some CO when initially turned-on. Never use charcoal grills inside a home, tent, camper or unventilated garage. Don't leave vehi-

cles running in an enclosed garage, even to "warm up" your car on a cold morning.

- Know how to respond to a CO detector alarm. If your alarm sounds, immediately open windows and doors for ventilation. If anyone in the home is experiencing symptoms of CO poisoning -- headache, dizziness or other flu-like symptoms -- immediately evacuate the house and call the fire department. If no one is experiencing these symptoms, continue to ventilate, turn off fuel-burning appliances and call a qualified technician to inspect your heating system and appliances as soon as possible. Because you have provided ventilation, the CO buildup may have dissipated by the time help responds and your problem may appear to be temporarily solved. Do not operate any fuel-burning appliances until you have clearly identified the source of the problem. A CO detector alarm indicates elevated levels of CO in the home. Never ignore the alarm.

  CO alarms are designed to alert residents before carbon monoxide concentrations grow to toxic levels or begin to make residents feel sick.

"A CO alarm should not be confused with a smoke alarm," said John Drengenberg of Underwriters Laboratories. "A smoke alarm tells you to get out immediately. A CO alarm warns of a potential poisoning risk, usually long before symptoms are apparent, which allows you adequate time to get help. You need both life-safety devices in your home."