



STATE OF MICHIGAN

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
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## **MDHHS reminds Michigan residents to take steps to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning**

*Families urged to check fuel burning appliances, install carbon monoxide detectors as they turn back clocks for daylight saving time change*

LANSING, Mich. – The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) urges Michigan residents to prevent carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning by installing CO detectors and making sure fuel burning appliances are properly working when turning back the clocks for the end of daylight saving time Sunday, Nov. 5.

CO is known as the "silent killer" as it is a colorless, odorless and tasteless poisonous gas. Most CO poisonings take place at home and are caused by items that are not properly installed, cared for or vented, including furnaces, water heaters, generators, gas grills, dryers, lanterns, space heaters, fireplaces, chimneys and gas stoves. CO is a gas that forms whenever a fossil fuel is burned (charcoal, wood, propane, gasoline, etc.).

"Carbon monoxide (CO) detectors save lives," said State Fire Marshal Kevin Sehlmeier. "It is imperative that you have a functioning CO detector on every level of your home, and near every sleeping area."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that each year approximately 100,000 people across the country visit the emergency department for accidental CO poisoning. In 2020, the latest year that data are available from the MDHHS Michigan Environmental Public Health Tracking Program (MiTracking), there were 672 Michigan emergency department visits for CO poisoning.

CO poisoning can be prevented by practicing the safety tips listed below and knowing the symptoms of exposure. At high levels, CO can cause death within minutes. If you suspect you may be experiencing CO poisoning, or your CO detector alarm goes off, **go outside immediately for fresh air, and THEN call 911.**

"Symptoms of carbon monoxide exposure include headache, dizziness, fatigue, shortness of breath, confusion and nausea," said Dr. Natasha Bagdasarian, chief medical executive. "If you think you have been exposed, it is important to get into an area with fresh air immediately and seek medical attention."

To protect yourself and your family from CO, follow these safety tips:

- **Make sure you have working CO detectors.** Detectors on every level of your home, including the basement and near sleeping areas, are strongly recommended. Detectors can be purchased at most hardware and big box stores.
- **Change batteries every six months (fall and spring) and replace your CO detector every five years or according to manufacturer's instructions.** Daylight saving time is a good time each year to replace the batteries in your CO detector and push the "Test" button to be sure it's working properly.
- **Where you have fuel burning devices, use a CO detector.** Having a CO detector handy when using tents, cabins, RVs, and boats with enclosed cabins is a good safety practice.
- **Have your furnace or wood-burning stove inspected every year.** Hire a professional to make sure it is functionally sound and vents properly outside the home.
- **Generators should be run at a safe distance (at least 20 feet) from the home.** Never run a generator in the home, garage or right next to windows, doors or other enclosed spaces.
- **Never run a car in an enclosed space.** If a vehicle is running in the garage, the garage door must be fully open to allow harmful fumes to escape.
- **Never run a gasoline or propane heater or charcoal, gas or wood grill inside your home or in any enclosed space, including a garage.**

Visit [Michigan.gov/MiTracking](https://Michigan.gov/MiTracking) for more information and data about CO poisoning.

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