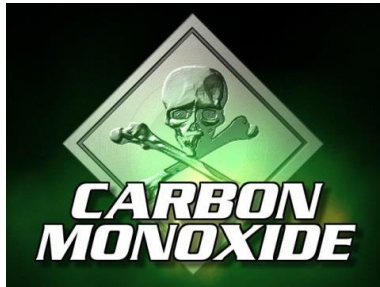


Keeping Your Home Free From Two Toxic Gases

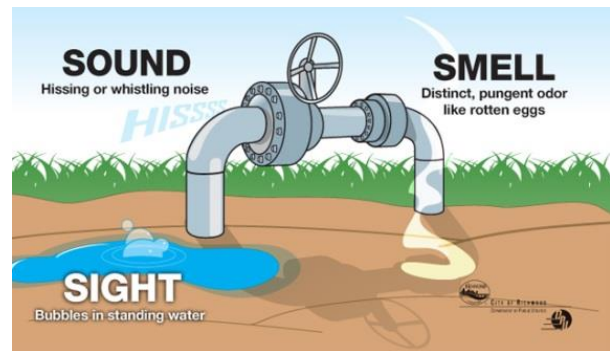
Once the chill starts setting in, you may haul out the gas space heaters or light up the fireplace to help keep your home cozy. But it's important to realize that these and other common household items can emit dangerous gases that can build up in your home to unsafe, even deadly levels.

Here's a quick look at two common gases that can be harmful indoors, especially when temperatures start to plummet and families start looking for ways to stay warm:



Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless, tasteless poisonous gas that's often called the "silent killer." It's produced by fumes from charcoal grills, automobiles, and appliances, stoves, and heaters that run on oil, gas, propane, kerosene, or wood. Exposure to low or moderate levels can cause flu-like symptoms that can quickly become much more serious. At high levels, carbon monoxide can cause loss of consciousness and can kill in a matter of minutes, often without warning and even as people sleep.

Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) can come from natural gas heaters, gas ovens, and gas stoves, all of which may make symptoms much worse for kids with asthma, says a new study by researchers at Johns Hopkins University. Looking at 150 2- to 6-year-olds in inner-city Baltimore, the scientists found that those living in homes with high levels of the gas had more frequent asthma flare-ups (with symptoms like coughing, wheezing, chest tightness, and shortness of breath). Most of the households used natural gas heating and gas stoves.



A natural gas leak

What This Means to You

To keep your home free of toxic fumes from nitrogen dioxide and carbon monoxide the no. 1 thing you can do is have a qualified professional inspect and service these common indoor gas-producers once a year, *before* the weather gets cold and you really need to use them:

- wood stoves
- fireplaces
- heating systems
- gas or oil furnaces
- gas or kerosene space heaters
- gas hot water heaters
- gas ovens and ranges
- gas clothes dryers

Not only will this give you peace of mind about dangerous gases, an annual inspection will also ensure that these things are working the way they should — and *not* costing you extra money or wasting heat.

Here are some other pointers to keep your home clear of deadly carbon monoxide, in particular:

- Make sure furnaces, gas appliances, and gas or kerosene space heaters are *always* properly ventilated.
- Have chimneys and flues checked to make sure they aren't blocked by debris (like squirrel or bird's nests or leaves) that could cause hazardous fumes to become trapped inside your home.
- Only use charcoal grills, camping stoves, lanterns, hibachis, generators, gas-powered tools and equipment (like mowers, snow blowers, weed trimmers, chainsaws, pressure washers, etc.) *outside*— *never inside* your home, garage, basement, any enclosed area (like a camper or tent), *or* near a window, door, or vent that could draw the fumes inside.
- *Never* use gas ovens or gas ranges to heat your home.
- Recognize symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning and get help *immediately*, especially if many of the members of your household are experiencing these flu-like symptoms at the same time but you all feel OK when you're away from home:
 - headache
 - dizziness
 - lightheadedness
 - weakness
 - nausea or vomiting
 - feeling more tired than usual
 - confusion or hallucinations
 - chest pain
 - shortness of breath
 - vision, walking, or memory problems
- *Never* keep your car (or lawnmower) running in your garage, even if the garage door is open. Deadly carbon monoxide pours out from your tailpipe and can quickly accumulate and spread not just throughout your garage, but into your home.
- Make sure your tailpipe isn't by plugged by snow or other debris before letting your car idle if it's parked outside when it snows, even if you're just trying to heat up the car before getting in it.
- Install CO detectors on every floor of your home, preferably near potential sources. Make sure to test the devices and check the batteries regularly. And it's wise to put new batteries in smoke detectors and check that they're also up to par while you're at it.

Check with your local hardware store or online to sites such as Amazon.com or others to find detectors that will alert you to carbon monoxide or natural gas exposure. Several are called universal detectors that will detect both types of gas. **Stay safe!**

There are several brands available.



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