

For Immediate Release
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Last year, 90 people in Missouri died from carbon monoxide exposure and more than 289 others were sent to hospital emergency departments.

Unionville residents, James and Heather Garner and their children, had a recent experience where carbon monoxide detectors likely saved their lives. They were awakened at 2:45 am by the first alarm and about 5 minutes later the second alarm went off. They opened up the front and back doors to ventilate the house and attempt to remove the carbon monoxide. They left the house for the rest of the night.

James Garner explained, "Heather and I both had above level carbon monoxide 12 hours later, which Heather had to be treated for. If it wasn't for those alarms, we would most likely not have woken up! We are truly thankful to our Father in Heaven for those devices - they saved our lives."

Home heating systems help ward off winter's chill, but faulty systems also increase the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. The Putnam County Health Department urges Missourians to ensure their furnaces and other heat sources are working properly to prevent carbon monoxide from seeping into their homes.

"Carbon monoxide is an invisible, odorless and tasteless gas that can make you sick," said Ericka Klingner, PCHD Administrator. "In high quantities, it can kill."

Carbon monoxide is released when fuels – including gasoline, natural gas, propane, kerosene, charcoal and wood – are burned. Carbon monoxide poisoning can come from a variety of sources including furnaces, space heaters, stoves, generators, hot water heaters, clothes dryers, kerosene heaters, wood stoves and fireplaces. Cars, trucks and boats can also produce high levels of carbon monoxide.

Because the gas can easily go unnoticed, the department recommends using carbon monoxide detectors, which are similar to smoke detectors. They are relatively inexpensive and can be purchased at department or hardware stores and online.

Early symptoms of carbon monoxide exposure include: headache, dizziness, weakness, sleepiness, nausea, and vomiting.

Carbon monoxide can also cause people with heart disease to develop an irregular heartbeat. Exposure to higher concentrations of the gas can cause disorientation, coma and convulsions, eventually concluding in death.

Anyone who suspects they are suffering from carbon monoxide poisoning should get fresh air immediately and seek medical help.

Additional precautions to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning include:

- Install and operate natural gas-fueled appliances according to the manufacturer's instructions;

- Have your home heating and ventilation systems inspected annually;
- Do not use natural gas-fueled appliances such as an oven, cooking stove or clothes dryer to heat your home, even for a short time;
- Do not burn charcoal inside a house, garage, vehicle, or tent or in a fireplace for heating or cooking;
- Do not use unvented gas or kerosene heaters in closed spaces, especially near or in sleeping areas; Opening a door or window does not allow enough fresh air to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning;
- Never leave an automobile running in a closed garage or in a garage attached to the house even with the garage door open;
- Do not use any gasoline-powered engines, such as mowers, weed trimmers, chainsaws, power washers or generators, in enclosed spaces;
- Be aware that all boat motors are a source of carbon monoxide. Do not allow any swimming near the exhaust and keep children away from the boat motor;
- Do not leave the rear window or back door of a vehicle open while driving, and repair leaking exhaust pipes and mufflers on automobiles.

For more information about preventing carbon monoxide poisoning, visit www.dhss.mo.gov/CO/.