



## Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health

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### MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Cerro Gordo County carbon monoxide poisoning Emergency Room visits are double the state rate!**

(Mason City) – With colder temperatures just around the corner, heaters and ways to keep warm will be turned on. But do you know if your heat source is working properly? What if it's leaking carbon monoxide into your home?

Carbon monoxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) is known as the “Silent Killer” due to the fact that it is undetectable by our senses. We can't see it, taste it, or smell it. On average, over 430 people die unintentionally from carbon monoxide poisoning in the United States, every year.

According to the Iowa Department of Public Health's County Health Snapshot, Cerro Gordo County had nearly double the carbon monoxide poisoning emergency department visits than the state of Iowa in 2015. The good news is you can prevent carbon monoxide poisoning by taking the following steps:

- **Know the symptoms of CO<sub>2</sub> poisoning.** People often mistake these symptoms for the flu. The most common symptoms are headache, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, confusion, sleepiness, etc.
- **Know the sources of CO<sub>2</sub> poisoning; it's not just your heating system.** Common sources include gas and oil furnaces, boilers, water heaters, wood-burning fire places/stoves, gas ovens, gas/kerosene space heaters, gas or charcoal grills, vehicles, blood chimneys/flues, and gas powered machinery like lawn mowers, snow blowers, or pressure washers.
- **Place carbon monoxide alarms near each sleeping area and on each floor of your home.** These can be bought at local hardware stores for approximately \$20, and can save your life!
- Never use charcoal grills or engines inside your home, garage, or basement, even for a short period of time.
- Never warm up your vehicle in the garage on a cold day, and start lawn equipment and snow blowers outside.
- Check your furnaces, chimneys, vents, and appliances each fall to ensure they are working properly, or hire a heating contractor to do so.
- Do not use the kitchen stove/oven to heat your home. Follow the directions closely with all other heaters.

If your carbon monoxide alarm goes off or you think you are experiencing symptoms from carbon monoxide poisoning, get fresh air immediately and call 911 or a qualified technician.

For more information on carbon monoxide poisoning and how to prevent it, contact Jenna Willems at the Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health, 641-421-9339.

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