

PROTECTING YOURSELF FROM CARBON MONOXIDE



WHAT IS CARBON MONOXIDE?

Solid fuels including wood are safe to burn if an appliance is installed, maintained and used correctly.

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a highly poisonous gas. It is produced by incomplete burning of carbon based fuels.

CO has no taste, smell or colour and can be present in the fumes (combustion products) of gas, oil, solid mineral fuel or biomass burning appliances.

Exposure to low levels of the poisonous CO gas can cause permanent damage to your health and in extreme cases, if exposed to CO over a long period, can lead to brain damage and paralysis. Higher exposure is potentially fatal.

The following advice could dramatically reduce your risk.

THE CAUSE OF DEATHS FROM CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING USUALLY RELATE TO INCORRECT INSTALLATION, LACK OF MAINTENANCE OR INADEQUATE AIR SUPPLY FOR THE APPLIANCE TO FUNCTION PROPERLY.



HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM CARBON MONOXIDE

Using an appliance that is poorly maintained, incorrectly installed or using poor quality fuel will significantly increase the risk of the appliance producing carbon monoxide.

- Only use appliances that fully comply with current British Standards
- Have your appliances installed by a registered competent installer. Installers will ensure that work carried out complies with current Building Regulations.
- Have your appliance regularly maintained by a HETAS Registered Installer. Faulty appliances can lead to poor combustion which produces CO.
- Burn the correct fuel for the appliance.
- De-ash the appliance as per manufacturers instructions.
- If the appliance burns wood, make sure the wood is seasoned and dry. Unseasoned wet wood suppresses combustion yet produces products of combustion which contain CO. If possible, use HETAS Certified wood fuel, which guarantees a low moisture content.
- Make sure your chimney is swept at frequent intervals. Use a HETAS Approved Chimney Sweep. A blocked or restricted chimney will reduce flue

performance, increasing the chances of the appliance spilling CO and other fumes into the property.

- Make sure the appliance is set-up with sufficient combustion air to burn cleanly. Appliances with an incorrect fuel air mix can increase the rate of CO production.
- Make sure there is enough fresh air in the room where the appliance is installed. Some appliances require a fresh air vent in the room where they are located. This is a permanently open vent to external air that must remain unblocked.
- A responsible landlord should provide proof that a solid fuel appliance has been serviced and the chimney recently swept before the start of a tenancy. Thereafter, the ongoing maintenance of appliance and chimney is subject to contractual conditions detailing responsibilities.
- Carry out the user maintenance schedule as per the appliance 'installation and use' instructions.

FIT AN AUDIBLE CO ALARM

Building Regulations Approved Document J now makes it compulsory in England & Wales, to fit a CO alarm complying with BS EN 50291:2001 whenever a new or replacement solid fuel appliance is fitted in a dwelling.

The alarm must be permanently installed, be either mains or battery powered, and should incorporate self-test and audible alert if the battery or detector cell develops a fault.

HETAS recommend that a CO alarm is installed to existing installations by a registered installer, ensuring that the alarm is selected and fitted in accordance with the Building Regulations.



No safety device is infallible and should never be taken as a substitute for correct appliance installation, or for regular and effective chimney sweeping, correct appliance operation and maintenance by a Registered Installer. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions.

ALWAYS LOOK FOR THE HETAS LOGO WHEN EMPLOYING AN INSTALLER



THE EARLY SYMPTOMS OF CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

Early symptoms of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning can be very similar to many common ailments and may easily be confused with flu, viral infections, food poisoning, or simply tiredness or fatigue. Symptoms to look for include:

- Headaches
- Stomach pains
- Erratic behaviour
- Chest pains
- Loss of consciousness
- Collapse
- Nausea
- Dizziness
- Tiredness
- Breathlessness
- Drowsiness
- Visual problems
- Vomiting

WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT A CO ESCAPE

If you suspect fumes are escaping from your combustion appliance into your home, or your carbon monoxide alarm goes off:

- Where an appliance is automatically fed with fuel, **turn it off.**
- **Open the doors and windows** in your property and ventilate thoroughly.
- **Leave the property immediately** and don't return until your appliance or boiler has extinguished and any CO has dispersed from the household.
- **If you feel unwell**, go to your doctor, call NHS Direct on 111 (0845 4647 in some areas) or if it is urgent phone 999 for an ambulance. Tell them you feel your symptoms may be related to carbon monoxide poisoning.

Before you re-use the appliance, have it inspected and the chimney checked by a HETAS Registered Installer or Approved Chimney Sweep. Do not use the appliance until you are told it is safe to do so.

FINDING A HETAS REGISTERED INSTALLER

To find your nearest HETAS Registered Installer, please call us on **01242 681270** or visit us at www.hetas.co.uk/find-installer/



FINDING AN APPROVED CHIMNEY SWEEP

To find your nearest HETAS Approved Chimney Sweep, please call on **01242 681270** or visit us at www.hetas.co.uk/find-chimney-sweep/



MORE INFORMATION

The All-Party Parliamentary Carbon Monoxide Group (APPCOG) is the leading forum for Parliamentarians, civil servants and energy industry representatives to work together to discuss ways of tackling carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning, to improve government policy on carbon monoxide safety, and to raise public awareness of the threat posed by deadly CO gas.

www.policyconnect.org.uk/appcog/

For gas related incidents contact the HSE gas safety advice line.

0800 300363
www.hse.gov.uk/gas/domestic

HETAS - THE OFFICIAL BODY FOR SOLID FUEL, WOOD AND BIOMASS HEATING SYSTEMS, FUELS AND SERVICES



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