



## MID-MICHIGAN DISTRICT HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Your public health team, connecting with our communities to achieve healthier outcomes

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### **Beware of the ‘silent killer’**

Ithaca, Stanton, St. Johns- You can't see, taste or smell carbon monoxide, but at high levels, it can be deadly.

According to the Annual Report on Carbon Monoxide Poisoning, published in 2015 by Michigan Department of Community Health, 828 Michiganders were unintentionally poisoned by carbon monoxide, including 34 who died from the exposure. The leading causes were faulty furnaces, water heaters and generators; but anything that burns fuel, like cars, kerosene heaters, charcoal grills and camp stoves all produce carbon monoxide and can be dangerous.

Most people exposed to carbon monoxide are completely unaware, which is why it has been dubbed the “silent killer.” It quietly enters the bloodstream and cuts off delivery of oxygen to the body's organs and tissues. The first symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning resemble the flu, and include headache, dizziness, confusion, drowsiness, nausea and vomiting. Do not ignore these symptoms, especially if more than one person in the household experiences them. As more of the gas is inhaled, it can cause unconsciousness, brain damage and even death within a matter of minutes.

Carbon monoxide poisoning is completely preventable, so be sure you know how to protect your home and family:

- Place a carbon monoxide detector on every floor of your home, with one near bedrooms.
- Have a heating professional clean and inspect wood and fuel-powered appliances, chimneys and vents yearly.
- Generators should be several feet from your home, away from open windows, doors and air intakes.
- Don't use fuel-powered items indoors, like generators, grills, or camp stoves.
- Don't use a gas oven to heat your home, even for a short time.
- Don't run vehicles in the garage, even if the door is open.

If you suspect you or a family member has been exposed to carbon monoxide, go outside immediately, and go to the nearest emergency room or call 911.

*Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.*

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