

HETAS CARBON MONOXIDE AWARENESS



be
**carbon
monoxide**
aware



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.

Solid fuel and biomass are safe to burn if the appliance is installed, maintained and used correctly.

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

The following advice could dramatically reduce the risk.

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
- breathlessness
- nausea
- dizziness
- collapse
- loss of consciousness
- tiredness
- drowsiness
- vomiting
- pains in the chest
- stomach pains
- erratic behaviour
- visual problems

Protect yourself from CO

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 the appliances installed by a registered competent installer. The installer will ensure the installation complies with the current Building Regulations requirements. The Building Regulations are there to protect you from these problems, ensure your installation complies.
- ◆ Have your appliance regularly maintained by a HETAS registered engineer. Appliance faults can lead to bad combustion which produces CO.
- ◆ Burn the correct fuel for the appliance. De ash the appliance frequently. If the appliance burns wood make sure the wood is seasoned and dry. Unseasoned wet wood suppresses the combustion and produces a smoky CO rich exhaust. If possible use only accredited firewood from the HETAS Solid Biomass Assurance Scheme.
- ◆ Make sure your chimney is swept at frequent intervals. Use a trained HETAS approved chimney sweep. A blocked or restricted chimney will reduce the draw producing CO and increasing the chances of the appliance spilling fumes into the house.
- ◆ Make sure the appliance is set-up with sufficient combustion air to burn cleanly. Slumbering appliances may not have the correct fuel air mix increasing the chance of CO production.
- ◆ Always make sure there is enough fresh air in the room where the appliance is situated. Make sure combustion air vent's are not blocked.
- ◆ A responsible landlord will provide proof that the appliance has been serviced and the chimney swept at least once a year (it is compulsory for them to do this with gas appliances).

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:-

- ◆ If your appliance is automatically fed with fuel, turn the appliance off.
- ◆ Open doors and windows to ventilate the building.
- ◆ Leave the building immediately and don't return until your appliance or boiler has extinguished and the air in the room is clear.
- ◆ If you feel unwell go to your Doctor, call NHS Direct on 0845 4647 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 reuse the appliance, have it serviced and the chimney swept by a HETAS registered installer or approved chimney sweep.

Do not use the appliance until you are told it is safe to do so.

Fit an audible CO alarm

Building Regulations Approved Document J now makes it compulsory to fit an audible CO alarm complying with BS EN 50291:2001 with each new or replacement solid fuel/biomass appliance.

HETAS recommend a CO alarm is installed with every installation including existing ones.

The alarm must never be considered a replacement for correct maintenance or chimney sweeping.

Other places for help

The **Solid Fuel Association** provide a consumer helpline giving helpful advice on CO & solid fuel issues.

Tel: 0845 601 4406

Web: www.solidfuel.co.uk



For Gas related incidents contact the HSE Gas Safety Advice Line

Tel: 0800 300 363

www.hse.gov.uk/gas/domestic/co.htm



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