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MEMA ISSUES CARBON MONOXIDE SAFETY TIPS

“Carbon Monoxide (CO) is known as the *Odorless Killer* because it is a poisonous gas that has no visible color, taste, or odor,” stated Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) Director Don Boyce. “Each year, particularly during the cold winter months, many people die or are injured from accidental carbon monoxide poisoning.”

MEMA provides these tips to help keep your family safe from the threat of Carbon Monoxide.

- CO alarms should be installed in a central location outside each separate sleeping area and on every level of the home, following the manufacturer’s instructions for placement and mounting height. For the best protection, interconnect all CO alarms throughout the home, then when one sounds, they all sound.
- Test CO alarms at least once a month; replace them according to the manufacturer’s instructions.
- Have fuel-burning heating equipment and chimneys inspected by a professional every year before cold weather sets in.
- When using a fireplace, open the flue for adequate ventilation.
- Never use your oven to heat your home.
- A generator should be used in a well-ventilated location outdoors away from windows, doors and vent openings.
- Only use barbecue grills (which can produce CO) outside.
- If you need to warm a vehicle, remove it from the garage immediately after starting it. Do not run a vehicle or other fueled engine or motor indoors, even if garage doors are open. Make sure the exhaust pipe of a running vehicle is not covered with snow.
- During and after a snowstorm, make sure vents for the dryer, furnace, stove, and fireplace are clear of snow build-up.

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- Be sure the fire is out before you go to sleep. Never close the damper with hot ashes in the fireplace. A closed damper will cause the fire to heat up again, forcing toxic CO fumes into the house.
- If the CO alarm sounds, immediately move to a fresh air location outdoors or by an open window or door. Make sure everyone inside the home is accounted for. Call for help from a fresh air location and stay there until emergency personnel.

The legislation known as “Nicole’s Law” was signed on November 4, 2005 to protect the Massachusetts public from the dangers of carbon monoxide. The bill is named for Nicole Garofalo, a 7-year-old Plymouth girl who died in January of 2005 after a snow-blocked heating vent trapped toxic carbon monoxide fumes in the family home. To prevent future cases of carbon monoxide poisoning, “Nicole’s Law” requires residential buildings that contain enclosed parking or equipment such as boilers, furnaces and hot water heaters to have working carbon monoxide alarms. Local fire departments will inspect residences upon the sale or transfer of a property, to ensure compliance with the law.

The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) is the state agency responsible for coordinating federal, state, local, voluntary and private resources during emergencies and disasters in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. MEMA provides leadership to: develop plans for effective response to all hazards, disasters or threats; train emergency personnel to protect the public; provide information to the citizenry; and assist individuals, families, businesses and communities to mitigate against, prepare for, and respond to and recover from emergencies, both natural and man made. For additional information about these briefings, go to the MEMA website at www.mass.gov/mema.