

Thomas F. Barraga
Suffolk County Legislator
187 Sunrise Highway, Suite C
West Islip, New York 11795
(P) 631-854-4100
(F) 631-854-4103

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CONTACT: Megan Ockovic
E-Mail: Megan.Ockovic@suffolkcountyny.gov



NEWS FROM THE 11TH DISTRICT

January is Carbon Monoxide Awareness Month

Low levels of CO in your home can cause chronic headaches, mild nausea, and shortness of breath. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning is the leading cause of unintentional poisoning and death in the United States. Carbon monoxide is often referenced as the "silent killer" because it can't be seen or smelled, but at high levels it can kill a person in minutes. Moderate levels of CO can cause you and your family to experience severe headaches, dizziness, mental confusion, nausea, or fainting. You can even die if these levels persist for a long time. Since many of these symptoms are similar to those of the flu, food poisoning, or other illnesses, you may not recognize that CO poisoning could be the cause.

CO is produced whenever any fuel such as gas, oil, kerosene, wood or charcoal is burned. If appliances that burn, such as furnaces, boilers, water heaters, and stoves fuel are installed, maintained, and used properly, the amount of CO produced is usually not hazardous. However, if appliances are not working properly or are used incorrectly, dangerous levels of CO can result. Hundreds of people die accidentally every year from CO poisoning caused by malfunctioning or improperly used fuel-burning appliances. Even more die from CO produced by idling cars. Pregnant women, infants, the elderly, and people with anemia or with history of heart or respiratory disease can be especially vulnerable. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that non-fire-related CO poisoning is responsible for approximately 15,000 emergency department visits and nearly 500 deaths annually in the United States. These dangers, however, are entirely preventable. Read on to see how you can protect yourself and your family.

Carbon Monoxide Safety and Awareness Tips

Always Do

- Install a UL certified battery-operated or battery back-up CO detector in your home and check or replace the battery when you change the time on your clocks each spring and fall. Remember that CO detectors do not serve as smoke detectors and vice versa.
- Carefully follow manufacturers' instructions for placement, use and maintenance.
- Have a high standard CO detector fitted outside sleeping areas, and main living areas on each level of the home.
- If the detector sounds leave your home immediately and call 911. Digital models offer the advantage of being able to observe levels that are below the alarm threshold.
- Recognize symptoms and see prompt medical attention if you suspect CO poisoning.
- Adhere to manufacturers' instructions when using appliances such as furnaces, ranges, water heaters and room heaters; engine-powered equipment such as portable generators.

Regularly Do

- Have a qualified technician check fuel-burning appliances and chimneys at the beginning of each heating season to make sure they are operating properly.
- Have your vents and chimney checked and cleaned annually.
- Have an energy audit of your home done every five to ten years – not only will it identify carbon monoxide leaks (even at low levels,) but an audit can also lower your utility bills by identifying waste and improving your home's energy performance. Visit longislandgreenhomes.org for more information.

Never Do

- Never use a generator, charcoal grill, camp stove, or other gasoline or charcoal-burning device inside your home, basement, garage or outside near a window.
- Never run a car or truck inside a garage attached to your house, even if you leave the door open.
- Never burn anything in a stove or fireplace that isn't vented.
- Never heat your house with a gas stove or oven.
- Never sleep in a room with an un-vented gas or kerosene space heater.