

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## Know the risks and stay CO safe this winter

Exposure to the colourless, odourless gas can be deadly

As the temperature drops and furnaces fire up, Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency (SPSA), SaskPower Gas Inspections and SaskEnergy are offering tips to prevent carbon monoxide (CO) incidents.

“Every home should have both a CO alarm and smoke alarm,” SPSA President Marlo Pritchard said. “The alarm from these devices will alert you and your loved ones, allowing you to escape the danger that’s present in your home.”

CO, a colourless, tasteless, odourless gas, is produced when fuels such as natural gas, propane and kerosene don’t burn completely. Dangerous levels can accumulate when there isn’t proper ventilation or an adequate air supply.

When CO is inhaled, red blood cells don't get the oxygen they need. Continued exposure to high levels of CO leads to unconsciousness, convulsions, brain damage and ultimately, death.

If your CO detector goes off, remain calm. If anyone is experiencing flu-like symptoms, everyone should exit the house immediately and call 911. If no one is experiencing symptoms, you should shut off any gas appliances and open windows and doors to ventilate the building and call a qualified gas contractor to inspect appliances as soon as possible.

### At A Glance

- Carbon monoxide is a poisonous gas produced when fuels burn incompletely
- People are reminded to have working CO detectors and take steps to prevent CO incidents
- More information can be found at [saskpower.com/safety](http://saskpower.com/safety)

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“We tend to see an increase in CO incidents during the winter as people make greater use of natural gas appliances such as furnaces, or build fires in fireplaces,” said Asif Ali, Director of Gas Inspections. “However, incidents can occur at any time of year. You should ensure you have working CO detectors on each level of your home where people sleep and take precautions to prevent CO buildups in the first place.”

Here are some tips to keep your home CO safe:

- CO detectors typically expire after seven to 10 years. The “test” button only tells you if the CO detector has power. You need to look on the back of the detector for a manufacture or expiration date to determine if the detector needs to be replaced. Newer carbon monoxide detectors will signal they are reaching the end of life with a beep every 30 seconds.
- Ensure gas equipment, chimneys and gas appliances (including gas ranges) are properly installed, maintained and inspected annually by a licensed gas contractor.
- Never leave your vehicle idling in the garage, even if the door is open. Start lawn mowers and snowblowers outside.
- Keep flue vents and chimneys clear of debris and other blockages, including frost and snow.
- Don’t operate an unvented appliance (e.g. barbecue or portable propane heater) in an enclosed space, such as a garage, ice shack, tent, shop, shed, automobile, RV or trailer, or near any combustible materials.
- Never operate a generator in a house, garage or any enclosed building.

For more carbon monoxide safety information, go to [www.saskpower.com/safety](http://www.saskpower.com/safety).

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