



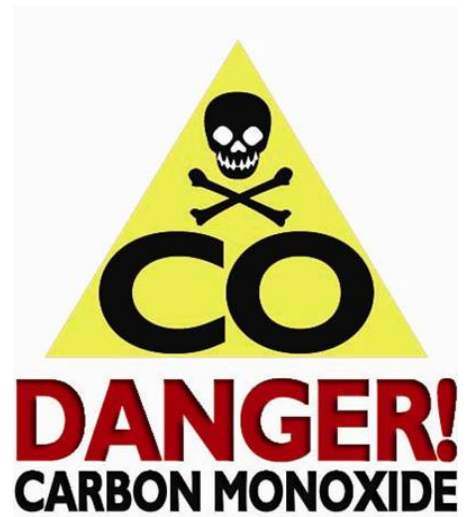
# Practicle Guide



# CARBON MONOXIDE

The Silent Killer

[www.myfireshop.com](http://www.myfireshop.com)



## What is carbon monoxide?

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a poisonous gas that you can't see, taste or smell. It is released when a carbon-containing fuel – such as gas, oil, coal, coke, petrol or wood – doesn't burn fully because not enough air is available.

## How does Carbon Monoxide poisoning occur?

This can happen when appliances such as room and water heaters, fires and cookers have been wrongly installed or poorly maintained, or when a chimney, flue or air vent into the room such as an air brick has been fully or partially blocked. Poor ventilation adds to the problem by allowing CO concentrations to build up. Anyone spending time with faulty appliances will be affected.

## Exposure to Carbon Monoxide

Accidental exposure to CO kills more than 50 people each year in England and Wales. It can kill without warning, sometimes in a matter of minutes. Low levels that don't kill you can still cause serious harm to your health – by affecting your nervous system or memory, for example – if breathed in over a long time.

The poisoning effects of CO can be long-lasting: in patients who suffer severe poisoning, long-term damage to the brain can occur.

## Are your heating and cooking appliances safe?

Look for signs of incomplete burning of fuel, such as when the pilot light or flame from a gas appliance is burning orange or yellow instead of mostly blue. (Note that this does not apply to fuel-effect, living-flame or decorative-flame gas fires. They are designed to look like flames from a solid-fuel appliance, and so are meant to appear orange or yellow.) Another sign to look out for is the pilot light frequently blowing out.



## The danger signs

Carbon monoxide may be present if there are any of the following danger signs:

- Gas flames that normally burn blue burn orange or yellow instead.
- Sooty stains appear on or just above appliances, regardless of the fuel being burnt.
- Coal or wood fires burn slowly or go out.
- The fire is difficult to light.
- The room is not properly ventilated.
- The chimney or flue is blocked - watch out for smoke in the room.

## How can I prevent CO Poisoning?

- Make sure rooms are properly ventilated
- Check to see the chimney, flue or ventilation extractor is not blocked
- Have the chimney swept regularly
- Have your heating and cooking appliances maintained regularly

## What are the symptoms of CO poisoning?

- Drowsiness
- Tiredness
- Nausea
- Headaches
- Chest pains
- Dizziness
- Difficulty in thinking
- Flu like symptoms
- Palpitations
- Collapse without necessarily losing consciousness, followed by unconsciousness and perhaps death



## What should I do if I have these symptoms?

- Turn off all cooking and room or water heating appliances that use fuel other than electricity
- Open windows in the room and house to let fresh air in
- For solid fuel fires, cookers or water heaters open the windows then carefully turn off the appliance or put the fire out
- Do not remain in the room
- Seek medical help immediately and inform the doctor that you may have CO poisoning. Be aware that doctors are generally poor at diagnosing CO. Also be aware that a blood or breath test can produce a false negative, if the patient has been out in the open air or sitting in a GP's surgery for some hours.
- Call a suitably qualified engineer to check all your appliances

## Who is at more risk?

The elderly and young are at higher risk than healthy adults. If you are suffering any of the symptoms, especially if more than one person in the house is suffering, you may be at risk of CO poisoning.

## How can I protect myself?

Fit an audible alarm that meets European standard EN50291

A British Standard was published on 1st March 1996, (number BS 7860 / BS EN 50291) but was withdrawn in April 2006 and is no longer a valid standard for approval of products. The only standard which now applies in the UK (and across Europe) is the European Standard (EN50291). It is legal to sell alarms that comply to the British Standard BS7860 provided they are old stock manufactured before the deadline of April 2006.