

# Safety! Messenger

Important safety information from Middleborough Gas & Electric Department

November 2016

## Protect your household from this silent killer

As we button up our homes for the cold weather ahead, it's especially important to be aware of the serious potential danger of carbon monoxide poisoning. Protect your household from this invisible killer by learning about it and taking wise precautions.

### What is carbon monoxide (CO)?

Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless, and tasteless gas produced by any type of burning fuel. When too much CO is in the air you breathe, it can cause you to become ill or even die, which is why all fuel-fired appliances must be carefully and properly vented to the outside.

### What are the symptoms of CO poisoning?

CO poisoning causes flu-like symptoms that are often mistaken for another illness. Common symptoms are headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, chest pain, and confusion. Unfortunately, people who are sleeping or intoxicated may die before they experience any symptoms at all, which is why it's crucial to do all you can to prevent it.

Find more carbon monoxide safety information at [MGED.com](http://MGED.com) and also at [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov).

### How can I protect my household?

- Install battery-operated or battery back-up CO detectors in your home. For detailed advice from the Middleborough Fire Department, visit [middleborough.com/fire/faq.html](http://middleborough.com/fire/faq.html)
- If a CO alarm sounds, immediately move to a fresh air location – outdoors or by an open window or door – and call 911 for help.
- Make sure your entire home is adequately ventilated, especially if you recently installed insulation, completed renovations, or enclosed your heating system to increase living space.
- Have your heating system serviced by a qualified technician every year. MGED customers can schedule a natural gas furnace inspection and cleaning by calling our office at 508-947-1371.

### DON'T

- Never use a natural gas stove or oven for heating – use them only for cooking. They were never designed to heat your home.
- Don't use any type of outdoor grill, camp stove, or other gasoline- or charcoal-burning device inside your home.
- Never use a generator inside your home, basement, or garage. Place generators outside at least 20 feet from any window, door, or vent.
- Don't run your car in an attached garage, even with the garage door open. If you need to warm up your car on a cold morning, move it outside first. Make sure the exhaust pipe of a running vehicle is not covered with snow.

### DO



# Winter is coming. Plan now to stay safe.

This winter, please remember to take care of your hard-working natural gas and electric equipment, and plan to keep your household safe when the snow flies.

## Take care of meters and vents

- During and after a snowstorm, make sure vents for the furnace, dryer, stove and fireplace are clear of snow build-up. If you're not sure where your vents are located, walk around your home and note their locations. If you have sidewall vents, make regular checks during snowstorms to remove drifted snow.
- Use a broom to keep your gas meter free from ice and snow. Be careful not to damage any of the equipment. Keep your electric meter clear, too.
- Keep blown or plowed snow away from the gas meter. Protect them from falling ice too.

## When you're trying to stay warm

- Never use a natural gas stove or oven for heating.
- Place space heaters on a level, hard surface, at least three feet away from anything flammable such as paper, clothing, bedding, curtains, or rugs. Don't leave a space heater unattended. Follow manufacturer's instructions about any venting requirements.
- If you're using a fireplace, use a glass or metal fire screen large enough to catch sparks and rolling logs. Make sure fireplace embers are completely out before you go to bed.

## When the unexpected happens

- If you smell a natural gas odor, either inside or outside your home, leave the area and call us from a safe, outside location. If the smell is strong, call 911.
- Report power outages to MGED through our online Outage Center at [MGED.com](http://MGED.com), or call us at 508-947-3023. We need your current phone number(s) on file so our new online outage reporting system will recognize you. Call our office to update your contact info for online reporting, and also so we can reach you in case of emergency.
- If you see a downed wire – or any problem with electrical equipment – stay away. Don't try to investigate it yourself. Assume all downed wires are live and dangerous. Call us for help.



## Winter ready means storm ready

Pick up or download a free copy of "Your Guide to Storm Safety," an MGED publication available at our administrative office and online at [MGED.com](http://MGED.com). You'll find advice on what to do before, during and after a storm in order to stay as safe and comfortable as possible. You can also find good advice at [ready.gov](http://ready.gov).