



## NEWS RELEASE

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CONTACT Kyle Foreman, Public Information Officer  
509-771-0875 [Cell]  
kforeman@co.grant.wa.us [email]  
509-762-1462 [Office]

### SEASONAL HAZARD: CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

**MOSES LAKE (29 SEPT 2009)** – With summer now past and cooler weather arriving, GRANT COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT reminds people about the hazards of fuel-powered appliances and the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Portable generators are useful when temporary or remote electric power is needed, but they also can be hazardous. The primary hazard to avoid when using a generator is CARBON MONOXIDE poisoning from the toxic engine exhaust. Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless gas produced by burning any fuel.

Every year, people die in incidents due to carbon monoxide poisoning. In 2007, three Royal City children died and two were sickened due to carbon monoxide poisoning caused by a generator running inside a home. This past June, two Kahlotus brothers died after being overcome in a cistern by carbon monoxide from a gas-powered pump.

To enhance citizen awareness, GRANT COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT offers the following information:

- 1. Carbon monoxide is a poisonous and odorless gas. It cannot be seen or smelled and it can kill a person in minutes.** Carbon monoxide is produced whenever any fuel such as gas, oil, kerosene, wood, or charcoal is burned. If appliances that burn fuel are maintained and used properly, the amount of carbon monoxide produced is usually not hazardous.

Unfortunately, hundreds of people die accidentally every year from carbon monoxide poisoning caused by appliances that are not used properly or that are malfunctioning. Even more people die from carbon monoxide produced from idling cars. Carbon monoxide can build up so quickly that victims are overcome before they can get help.

Once inhaled, carbon monoxide:

- Decreases the capacity of blood to carry oxygen;
  - Can cause permanent brain damage; and
  - Can cause chest pains or heart attacks in people with heart disease.
- 2. Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning** include headache, dizziness, fatigue, weakness, confusion, and nausea.
  - 3. Citizens can reduce the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning by following the following advice:**
    - Never use gasoline powered equipment indoors. “Adequate ventilation” is required when using gasoline-powered equipment. It can be difficult to determine how much ventilation is “adequate”; therefore, always use this kind of equipment outdoors!

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- Never operate or burn charcoal inside homes, tents, campers, vans, trucks, garages, or mobile homes. Do not burn charcoal in the fireplace in your home.
- Never use a gas oven to heat your home, even for a short time.
- Never idle a car in a garage, even when the garage door is open.
- Never sleep in a room while using an unvented gas or kerosene heater.
- Make sure that chimneys and flues are in good condition and are not blocked.
- Have oil and gas appliances and fireplaces as well as wood stoves checked every year by a trained professional.
- Carbon monoxide warning devices may provide additional protection, but should not replace the other prevention steps.

**4. If you suspect someone has been poisoned by carbon monoxide:**

- Move the person to a place with fresh air immediately. However, do not risk your life while doing so – entering the carbon monoxide-filled environment can kill you as well. If in doubt, wait for the fire department to arrive and let them make the rescue.
- Call 9-1-1 immediately and tell them that you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning.

For more information on life safety and emergency preparedness, visit the GRANT COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT web site at [www.co.grant.wa.us/EM](http://www.co.grant.wa.us/EM).

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