

# CITY OF MUSCATINE



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## STAYING SAFE FROM CARBON MONOXIDE THIS WINTER

**MUSCATINE, Iowa** – As temperatures drop, many households turn to supplemental heating sources such as fuel-burning fireplaces and portable generators. While these tools can provide much-needed warmth, they also increase the risk of carbon monoxide (CO) exposure when not used or maintained correctly.

Lorraine Carli, Vice President of Outreach and Advocacy at the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), is urging families to take simple steps to protect themselves from this dangerous gas.

### Understanding Carbon Monoxide

## CARBON MONOXIDE SAFETY TIPS



### Avoid using gas appliances

Cooking & heating indoors with gas appliances can be hazardous. Use generators & grills outside.

### Install CO alarms

Install a carbon monoxide alarm on every floor of your home, especially near bedrooms & sleeping areas.

### Test alarms often

Check your alarms monthly. Replace alarms as recommended by the manufacturer.

### Leave home immediately

In a CO emergency, leave your home immediately. Get to fresh air before calling for help.

### Remember

You cannot see, smell, or taste carbon monoxide gas. CO poisoning is serious & can be deadly.



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Carbon monoxide is an invisible, odorless, and colorless gas produced when fuels—including gasoline, wood, coal, natural gas, propane, oil, and methane—burn incompletely. Even small amounts can cause serious health effects over time, while high concentrations can be deadly. Because symptoms such as dizziness, fatigue, and headaches resemble other common illnesses, CO poisoning is often referred to as the “silent killer.”

Research shows that portable generators are the leading cause of non-fire CO deaths in homes, followed by heating systems and appliances. Each year, hundreds of people in the U.S. lose their lives to CO poisoning, and thousands more experience harmful exposure. Following key safety practices can significantly reduce these risks.

## Generator Safety Tips

- **Use generators outdoors in well-ventilated areas** at least 20 feet (7 meters) from doors, windows, and vents.
- **Never operate a generator inside an attached garage**, even if the door is open.
- **Position generators so exhaust cannot enter the home** through openings such as windows or doors. Direct fumes away from the building.

Additional guidance is available in NFPA’s free downloadable generator safety tip sheet. The NFPA video “[What You Didn’t Know about CO Poisoning](#)” also offers helpful information for families.

## Preventing CO Poisoning at Home

One of the most effective ways to stay protected is by installing carbon monoxide alarms. These devices are widely available, easy to use, and essential for early detection.

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Key reminders for CO alarms:

- **Choose alarms tested and listed by a qualified laboratory.**
- **Follow manufacturer instructions for placement and mounting.**
- **Install alarms outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home, as required by local codes.**
- **Test alarms monthly and replace them as recommended.**
- **If an alarm sounds, move to fresh air immediately—outside or near an open window—and call for help. Stay there until emergency responders arrive.**

**CARBON MONOXIDE (CO) POISONING**

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless gas that kills without warning. It claims the lives of hundreds of people every year and makes thousands more ill. Many household items including gas- and oil-burning furnaces, portable generators, and charcoal grills produce this poison gas. Following these important steps can keep your family safe.

**CO DETECTORS**

- Install battery-operated or battery back-up CO detectors near every sleeping area in your home.
- Check CO detectors regularly to be sure they are functioning properly.

**OIL & GAS FURNACES**

- Have your furnace inspected every year.

**PORTABLE GENERATORS**

- Never use a generator inside your home or garage, even if doors and windows are open.
- Only use generators outside, more than 20 feet away from your home, doors, and windows.

**PROTECT YOUR FAMILY**

## Additional Winter Safety Tips

As snow and cold weather persist, these practices can further reduce CO hazards:

- **Warm vehicles only after moving them out of the garage.** Never run engines indoors, and ensure exhaust pipes are clear of snow.
- **Keep exterior vents for dryers, furnaces, stoves, and fireplaces free of snow** during and after storms.
- **Open the fireplace flue when burning wood** to ensure proper ventilation.

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- **Use ovens strictly for cooking**—never as a heat source.

## Working Together for a Safer Winter

By staying informed and taking simple precautions, families can significantly reduce the risk of carbon monoxide exposure this winter.

More winter fire-safety resources—including NFPA’s free CO safety tip sheet—are available on the “[Put a Freeze on Winter Fires](#)” webpage.

### For additional information, visit:

- [Carbon Monoxide \(CO\) Poisoning](#) – Iowa Health & Human Services
- [Protect Your Family and Yourself from Carbon Monoxide Poisoning](#) – United States Environmental Protection Agency
- [Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Basics](#) – U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention