



## Detection is the Best Way to Thwart Invisible Killer

- More than [400 Americans die from unintentional carbon monoxide poisoning every year](#), according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. More than 20,000 visit the emergency room, and more than 4,000 others are hospitalized.

Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless gas that often goes undetected by humans, striking victims caught off guard or sound asleep. That's why it is referred to as the "invisible" or "silent" killer.

### Can it Happen to You?



Everyone is at risk for carbon monoxide

poisoning.

The CDC says infants, the elderly, and people with chronic heart disease, anemia or breathing problems are more prone to illness or death, but carbon monoxide doesn't discriminate – especially if certain conditions are present.

In April 2013, the off-road motor sport of [mud bogging was linked to carbon monoxide poisoning](#) when Shain Gandee, the 21-year-old star of the MTV series "Buckwild," died from accidental exposure. The tailpipe on his 1984 Ford Bronco became completely submerged in mud, and it is believed carbon monoxide leaked into the vehicle's cabin.

Two other men also were found dead inside Gandee's Ford Bronco, including his uncle.

In July 2015, four young people and a dog were found dead of reported carbon monoxide poisoning inside a remote family cabin in Maine. Authorities believe [they went to bed without shutting off a gas-powered generator](#) that had been running in the basement.

Exposure also can result in permanent neurological damage.

## Where Does Carbon Monoxide Come From?

Carbon monoxide is produced by burning fuel in cars or trucks, houseboats, small engines, stoves, lanterns, grills, fireplaces, gas ranges or furnaces. When the gas builds up in enclosed spaces, people or animals who breathe it can be poisoned. Ventilation does not guarantee safety.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission says about 170 people in the United States die every year from carbon monoxide produced by non-automotive consumer products, such as room heaters and charcoal that is burned in homes. In 2005, the CPSC counted at least [94 generator-related carbon monoxide poisoning deaths](#), 47 of which occurred during power outages due to severe weather.

## How Can I Prevent Carbon Monoxide Poisoning in My Home?



The National Safety Council recommends you

install a battery-operated or battery back-up carbon monoxide detector in your home. Check or replace the battery when you change the time on your clocks each spring and fall. The CDC offers these and other [best-practice tips](#):

- Have your heating system, water heater and any other gas or coal-burning appliances serviced by a qualified technician every year
- Do not use portable flameless chemical heaters indoors
- Never use a generator inside your home, basement or garage or less than 20 feet from any window, door or vent
- Have your chimney checked and cleaned every year
- Make sure your gas appliances are vented properly

## Steps to Take When Carbon Monoxide Alarm Sounds

The CPSC says [never ignore a carbon monoxide alarm](#); it is warning you of a potentially deadly hazard. Do not try to find the source of the gas. Instead, follow these steps:

- Immediately move outside to fresh air
- Call emergency services, fire department or 911
- Do a head count to check that all persons are accounted for

- Do not reenter the premises until emergency responders have given you permission to do so

## What Are the Symptoms of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning?

The U.S. Fire Administration has put together materials on the [dangers of carbon monoxide](#). Included is a list of carbon monoxide poisoning symptoms.

Low to moderate carbon monoxide poisoning is characterized by:

- Headache
- Fatigue
- Shortness of breath
- Nausea
- Dizziness

High level carbon monoxide poisoning results in:

- Mental confusion
- Vomiting
- Loss of muscular coordination
- Loss of consciousness
- Death

Symptom severity varies depending on the level of carbon monoxide and duration of exposure. Mild symptoms sometimes are mistaken for flu.