



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 16, 2015

CONTACT: Melissa Wade
Public Health Information Officer
412-578-8312 office
412-339-7995 cell
mwade@achd.net

Health Department Offers Tips for Protection Against Carbon Monoxide

PITTSBURGH – The Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) reminds residents of the danger of carbon monoxide poisoning as another heating season begins.

Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless and tasteless gas that is the by-product of incomplete combustion of a fuel. Hundreds of people die each year nationwide from accidental carbon monoxide poisoning, but most deaths could be prevented through greater awareness and education.

Common sources of carbon monoxide are a malfunctioning or incorrectly vented furnace, hot water heater, space heater, fireplace, cooking stove or other type of fuel-burning equipment. Misusing a charcoal grill or a cooking stove to warm a house and leaving a car, van or truck running in an attached or integral garage are other possible carbon monoxide sources.

“Carbon monoxide poisoning is known as the ‘silent killer’ because it can gradually cause a person to become unconscious and eventually die. That is why it is important to have carbon monoxide detectors which can provide early warning of a problem,” said ACHD Director, Dr. Karen Hacker. “Also, furnaces and fireplaces should be cleaned and inspected before each heating season.”

The Health Department strongly encourages the use of carbon monoxide detectors. They are extremely helpful and can be purchased at most stores that carry home supplies. They can be lifesavers. Even so, detectors are no substitute for regular furnace maintenance as with any device, it could malfunction or the batteries die.

Carbon monoxide poisoning may include any of the following symptoms: headaches, dizziness, weakness, nausea, rapid heartbeat, loss of hearing, blurry vision, vomiting, disorientation, seizures, loss of consciousness, coma, respiratory failure and cardiac arrest. Carbon monoxide poisoning often mimics common illnesses such as the flu and food poisoning. However, anyone who believes they are experiencing these symptoms due to carbon monoxide poisoning should leave the premises and immediately call 911.

Everyone is at risk, but individuals with health problems such as heart or lung diseases, the elderly, infants, children and pregnant women are especially vulnerable.

The Health Department is offering a free educational brochure on the dangers of carbon monoxide entitled “What You Should Know To Protect Your Family From Carbon Monoxide.” It is available from the Allegheny County Health Department by calling 412-687-ACHD (2243) or visiting the Health Department’s website at http://www.achd.net/air/pubs/pdf/edu-docs/Carbon_Monoxide.pdf .

###

KAREN HACKER, MD, MPH, DIRECTOR
ALLEGHENY COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT – PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE
542 FOURTH AVENUE • PITTSBURGH, PA 15219
PHONE (412) 687-ACHD • FAX (412) 578-8325 • WWW.ACHD.NET

