

HETAS ADVICE SHEET

CARBON MONOXIDE AWARENESS



be
**carbon
monoxide**
aware



Solid fuels including wood are safe to burn if an appliance is installed, maintained and used correctly.

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a highly poisonous gas. It is produced by incomplete burning of carbon based fuels. CO has no taste, smell or colour and can be present in the fumes (combustion products) of gas, oil, solid mineral fuel or biomass burning appliances.

Exposure to low levels of the poisonous CO gas can cause permanent damage to your health and in extreme cases, if exposed to CO over a long period, can lead to brain damage and paralysis. Higher exposure is potentially fatal.

The following advice could dramatically reduce the risk.

The Early Symptoms of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Early symptoms of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning can be very similar to many common ailments and may easily be confused with flu, viral infections, food poisoning, or simply tiredness or fatigue.

Symptoms to look for include:

Headaches

Breathlessness

Nausea

Dizziness

Loss of consciousness

Tiredness

Collapse

Stomach Pains

Erratic Behaviour

Visual Problems

Chest Pains

Vomiting

Drowsiness

Protect Yourself From Carbon Monoxide

Using an appliance that is poorly maintained, incorrectly installed or using poor quality fuel will significantly increase the risk of the appliance producing carbon monoxide.

- Only use appliances that fully comply with current British Standards
- Have your appliances installed by a registered competent installer. Installers will ensure that work carried out complies with current Building Regulations.
- Have your appliance regularly maintained by a HETAS registered engineer. Faulty appliances can lead to poor combustion which produces CO.
- Burn the correct fuel for the appliance. De-ash the appliance as per manufacturers instructions. If the appliance burns wood, make sure the wood is seasoned and dry. Unseasoned wet wood suppresses combustion yet produces products of combustion which contain CO. If possible, use HETAS certified wood fuel, which guarantees a low moisture content.
- Make sure your chimney is swept at frequent intervals. Use a HETAS approved chimney sweep. A blocked or restricted chimney will reduce flue performance, increasing the chances of the appliance spilling CO and other fumes into the property.
- Make sure the appliance is set-up with sufficient combustion air to burn cleanly. Appliances with an incorrect fuel air mix can increase the rate of CO production.
- Make sure there is enough fresh air in the room where the appliance is installed. Some appliances require a fresh air vent in the room where they are located. This is a permanently open vent to external air that must remain unblocked.
- A responsible landlord should provide proof that a solid fuel appliance has been serviced and the chimney recently swept before the start of a tenancy. Thereafter, the ongoing maintenance of appliance and chimney is subject to contractual conditions detailing responsibilities.
- Carry out the user maintenance schedule as per the appliance 'installation and use' instructions.

If You Suspect a CO Escape

If you suspect fumes are escaping from your combustion appliance into your home, or your carbon monoxide alarm goes off:

- Where an appliance is automatically fed with fuel, turn it off.
- Open the doors and windows in your property and ventilate thoroughly.
- Leave the property immediately and don't return until your appliance or boiler has extinguished and any CO has dispersed from the household.
- If you feel unwell, go to your doctor, call NHS Direct on 0845 4647 or if it is urgent phone 999 for an ambulance. Tell them you feel your symptoms may be related to carbon monoxide poisoning.

Before you re use the appliance, have it inspected and the chimney checked by a HETAS registered installer or approved chimney sweep. Do not use the appliance until you are told it is safe to do so.

Fit an Audible CO Alarm

As of October 1st 2010, Building Regulations Approved Document J now makes it compulsory (in England & Wales) to fit an audible alarm complying with BS EN 50291:2001 with each new or replacement solid fuel/biomass appliance.

HETAS recommend that a CO alarm is installed to existing installations by a registered engineer. A list of CO detectors can be found in the HETAS online guide. Remember to check the battery status or replace in line with guaranteed life.

No safety device is infallible and should never be taken as a substitute for initial correct appliance installation or for regular and effective chimney sweeping and proper appliance operation and maintenance by a competent engineer.

Other Places For Help

The Solid Fuel Association technical and consumer helpline provides helpful advice on any aspect of solid fuel appliance installation and use.



Tel: 0845 6014406

Web: www.solidfuel.co.uk

The Carbon Monoxide Consumer Awareness Alliance provides members of the public with advice related to all aspects of CO.



Web: www.becarbonmonoxideaware.com

For gas related incidents contact the HSE gas safety advice line



Tel: 0800 300363

Web: www.hse.gov.uk/gas/domestic

For more information and access to a variety of HETAS advice sheets, visit our website at www.hetas.co.uk