

MODEL MEMO

Inform Residents of Risks Associated with CO Poisoning

Here's a memo you can adapt for your site that tells residents what carbon monoxide is, the effects it can have on their health, the symptoms that may indicate carbon

monoxide poisoning, and seven safety tips for avoiding a dangerous buildup of carbon monoxide in their units.

AVOIDING CARBON MONOXIDE BUILDUP IN UNITS

To: **HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS**

From: **MANAGEMENT**

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Now that winter is upon us, carbon monoxide poisoning becomes an increasing concern. The risk of carbon monoxide poisoning increases in the winter because most residents keep their windows closed and are more likely to use appliances powered by gas or kerosene, such as space heaters.

This memo explains what carbon monoxide is and the effects it can have on your health. And it lists some common symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning, as well as some tips on preventing a dangerous buildup of carbon monoxide in your unit. Please read this memo carefully and keep it in a safe place for future reference.

WHAT IS CARBON MONOXIDE? Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless, and tasteless gas that's released whenever carbon-based substances, such as natural gas or charcoal, are burned. Carbon monoxide can build up to dangerous levels if there's no air vent or open window for it to escape from.

EFFECTS OF CARBON MONOXIDE EXPOSURE. Your body's red blood cells absorb carbon monoxide faster than they absorb oxygen, allowing carbon monoxide to replace the oxygen in the bloodstream—and basically suffocate tissues and organs.

SYMPTOMS OF CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING. Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include headache, fatigue, shortness of breath, nausea, and dizziness. In severe cases, carbon monoxide poisoning can lead to disorientation, unconsciousness, or death. If you exhibit any of these symptoms while inside your unit, but feel better when you've been out of your unit for several hours, carbon monoxide may be the cause. Look for a source of carbon monoxide and contact management immediately.

Here are seven tips you can follow to avoid a carbon monoxide buildup in your unit:

TIP #1: Make sure the flue in the fireplace is open. Before you light a fire in your fireplace, make sure the flue is open. The flue is the mechanism in a fireplace that lets the air and smoke out so that the fire can properly vent.

TIP #2: Never use a gas range or oven to heat your unit. Doing so can cause a dangerous buildup of carbon monoxide.

TIP #3: Never use a charcoal or gas grill indoors. Doing so can also cause a dangerous buildup of carbon monoxide.

TIP #4: Don't use portable heaters indoors. Don't use kerosene or gas space heaters to heat your unit. Kerosene and gas space heaters are a common carbon monoxide hazard. They're also a fire hazard and illegal in many cities. Also don't use flameless chemical heaters. Even though these heaters don't have a flame, they burn gas and can cause a buildup of carbon monoxide.

TIP #5: Don't use gas camp stoves indoors. They too can cause a dangerous buildup of carbon monoxide.

TIP #6: Don't leave a car idling in a closed garage. Don't leave your car idling in your garage with the garage door closed. If you do, the garage can quickly fill up with carbon monoxide and you can be overcome by carbon monoxide. Also don't leave your car idling in the garage even if the garage door is open. If you do, carbon monoxide can enter your unit through the door connecting the garage to the unit.

TIP #7: Don't block airflow around windows and doors. Don't cover unit windows with plastic sheeting or place rugs or towels under doors. Doing so blocks the flow of fresh oxygen into your unit and prevents any carbon monoxide in the unit from escaping, which could lead to a dangerous buildup of carbon monoxide, even if gas heating is working correctly.