

# News Release



November 2014



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## WINTER MEANS INCREASED RISK OF CO POISONING – SENSIBLE ADVICE ON KEEPING OUT OF HARM'S WAY FROM 'THE SILENT KILLER'

*As winter approaches and our use of fuel for heating increases there is a correspondingly higher level of risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. To minimise the risk of CO poisoning around the home, follow these important tips issued by B&ES (the Building & Engineering Services Association) who operate the free consumer advice service, the Heating Helpline.*

**18 November 2014** – As winter approaches and our use of fuel for heating increases there is a correspondingly higher level of risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. Carbon Monoxide (CO) is produced whenever any fuel such as gas, oil, kerosene, wood or charcoal is burned. CO is an

odourless, colourless, non-irritant gas and the most common cause of fatal poisoning in the UK with around 40 people each year being killed by it and hundreds more made seriously ill, caused by malfunctioning or improperly used fuel-burning boilers, heaters and other appliances.

Infants, elderly people, unborn babies and people with anaemia or with a history of heart or respiratory disease can be especially susceptible. Symptoms of CO poisoning may include headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, sleepiness and confusion.

To minimise the risk of CO poisoning around the home, follow these important tips issued by B&ES (the Building & Engineering Services Association) who operate the free consumer advice service, the Heating Helpline:

- Have your heating system, water heater and any other gas, oil, or coal burning appliances checked and serviced by a registered, qualified heating engineer every year.
- Install a battery-operated CO alarm in your home (and caravan, motor home or boat if you have one). Check or replace the alarm battery as advised by the manufacturer; this may mean every year depending on the type you buy. Test your CO alarm(s) frequently and replace dead batteries.
- Seek prompt medical attention if you suspect CO poisoning and are feeling dizzy, light-headed or nauseous.
- Never use a portable generator, BBQ/charcoal grill, camp stove or other fuel burning device inside your home, garage or in a confined area like a tent or awning.
- Don't run a car inside a garage attached to your house, even if you leave the door open.
- Do not use a gas oven to heat your home, even for a short time.

- Do not sleep in any room with an unvented gas or kerosene space heater.
- Make certain that doors on all wood stoves fit tightly.

Roderick Pettigrew, Chief Executive of B&ES, comments, "Homes with old appliances, or appliances that have been infrequently or never serviced, are most at risk, with research indicating that nearly a quarter of UK homes have one or more defective gas appliances.

"Carbon monoxide poisoning increases during the winter months because we use heaters more often, we let cars idle, we close off the outside – which decreases ventilation. Ironically the Government's various and laudable initiatives to encourage householders to improve the insulation of their homes will actually mean there is an even greater threat of CO poisoning due to the increased air-tightness of homes. That is why fitting a European Standard certified, audible carbon monoxide alarm is a vital second line of defence after having your appliances safety checked. CO alarms are now widely available and can cost as little as £15 – a small price to pay to help keep out of harm's way from the silent killer."

The Heating Helpline website has essential safety advice, including downloadable guides, along with an easy-to-use search facility to find local, reputable registered heating engineers. Visit [www.heatinghelpline.org.uk](http://www.heatinghelpline.org.uk) or call the Helpline free on 0800 810 8303.

*Ends*

**Issued on behalf of B&ES (the Building & Engineering Services Association) by Next Step Marketing Ltd**

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## Notes to editors

Since its formation in 1904, B&ES, the Building & Engineering Services Association (formerly the HVCA) has represented the interests of companies engaged in a wide range of building and engineering services including domestic heating and renewable technologies.

B&ES members are subject to regular, third-party inspection and assessment of their technical competence and commercial capability, carried out by an independent certification body at least every three years.

B&ES members who undertake gas installations are registered with Gas Safe – the gas safety watchdog body – and are also members of TrustMark, the Government-endorsed scheme designed to direct customers towards reliable tradespeople.

B&ES operates the *Heating Helpline* ([www.heatinghelpline.org.uk](http://www.heatinghelpline.org.uk)) to provide consumers with free, impartial advice on every aspect of home heating.

### **Caption for Picture:**

*“Wood burning stoves are increasingly popular but make sure that doors are closed and fit tightly and chimneys and flues are swept regularly by a qualified sweep.”*