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Carbon Monoxide

You can't smell it. You can't taste it. You can't see it. But you can do something about it.

Should you worry about carbon monoxide?

Although carbon monoxide poisoning from natural gas appliances is rare, it is essential to perform regular maintenance on your home gas appliances to help keep your gas appliances operating safely and efficiently. This includes having your gas furnace checked at least once a year by SDG&E® or a licensed heating contractor.

What causes carbon monoxide?

Carbon monoxide (known as CO) is a colorless, odorless, tasteless gas that is formed due to the incomplete burning of natural gas, propane, wood or other fuels. Carbon monoxide can be created by improper installation, poor maintenance, or other misuse or failure of home gas appliances.

Effects of CO poisoning

The early stages of carbon monoxide poisoning produce flu-like symptoms, such as headaches, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, shortness of breath and mental confusion. Prolonged exposure can lead to death.

Signs that may indicate the presence of CO

- A yellow, large and unsteady or erratic burner flame in the gas appliance (with the exception of decorative gas log appliances).
- An unusual pungent odor when the appliance is operating, due to incomplete combustion.
- Flu-like symptoms, such as headaches, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, shortness of breath and mental confusion.
- Soot residue on your gas appliances (including decorative gas logs).

What to do if you suspect CO is present in your home:

- Leave your home immediately and call 911 for emergency medical assistance if anyone in the home experiences carbon monoxide poisoning symptoms.

- Immediately turn off and stop using the suspected gas appliance.
- Contact SDG&E at **1-800-411-SDGE (7343)** or a licensed heating or plumbing contractor immediately to have the appliance inspected.

Don't use the suspected appliance until it has been inspected, serviced and determined to be safe by SDG&E or a licensed heating or plumbing contractor.

Preventing CO exposure

To keep your gas appliance operating safely and efficiently, SDG&E or a licensed heating or plumbing contractor should check your gas appliances every year. Failure to perform annual maintenance on your gas appliances may result in ineffective operation of your gas appliance and in some cases, dangerous exposure to carbon monoxide.

Periodically check your gas appliances for any unusual conditions such as soot or a yellow, large and erratic burner flame. When these or any other unusual conditions are recognized, contact SDG&E or a licensed heating or plumbing contractor to have the appliance checked immediately.

Furnace Safety

A clean and well-maintained furnace is safe and can save you money on your monthly bill. Here are some tips to help your natural gas furnace operate safely and efficiently:

- Have your gas furnace checked at least once a year by SDG&E or a licensed heating contractor.
- Check the appearance of the flame. If the flame is yellow, large and unsteady or erratic, the furnace needs to be inspected immediately by SDG&E or a licensed heating contractor and the condition corrected to safely operate.
- Many gas furnaces use air from the room to operate. Lint and dust, or items stored in or around the furnace can obstruct airflow. To operate safely and efficiently, your gas furnace must be kept free of dust and lint build-up or other obstructions stored near the furnace such as newspapers or cleaning equipment.

- Most forced-air furnaces have a filter that cleans the air before heating and circulating it throughout the home. Check the filter monthly for lint build-up when using your furnace; clean or replace it if necessary.

When installing a filter, be sure to replace the filter compartment door/panel of the furnace properly so it fits snugly. Never operate the furnace without the filter compartment door/panel properly in place because doing so may create the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

- ◆ Most newer forced-air furnaces have a safety switch that prevents furnace operation when the filter compartment door/panel is not in place.
- ◆ Some older forced-air furnaces do not have a safety switch and can be operated with the filter compartment door/panel off or not properly in place. These older furnaces, when installed in a closet and operated with the door/panel not in place, will circulate carbon monoxide throughout the house.

Appliance safety tips

- Have all gas appliance and venting repairs done by a licensed heating or plumbing contractor.
- Some decorative gas heating appliances, such as gas logs, are designed to have a yellow burner flame. However, if a decorative gas appliance is producing soot, it should be inspected and the condition corrected. When using your gas logs, make sure the damper is open.
- Never use your gas oven, range or outdoor barbecue to heat your home because they are not designed for that purpose.

Appliance maintenance is your responsibility. However, SDG&E will perform appliance safety checks on request.

Please Note: SDG&E accepts no responsibility for any changes in condition and/or performance of the appliance(s) after our inspection. Our inspection does not guarantee the continued safe operation of the appliance(s) and SDG&E is not responsible for maintenance, cleaning or repairs of customer-owned equipment. It is the sole responsibility of the customer to regularly inspect, clean and affect any necessary repairs on their appliance(s) in order to ensure optimum safety and performance. SDG&E also accepts no responsibility for unforeseen failures and negligent customer maintenance, including but not limited to alterations, modifications, improvised repairs and/or incorrectly fitted filters or other components.

Carbon monoxide home alarms

Whether or not to purchase and install a carbon monoxide alarm is your choice. Alarms may provide an extra level of safety, but they also require routine maintenance and replacement at least every three to five years to perform properly. Even with alarms in place, regular gas appliance maintenance is still required. Inspection and routine maintenance are still the best defense against accidental carbon monoxide poisoning from natural gas appliances.

For more information

For more safety information or information on energy efficient products and services contact us at **1-800-411-SDGE (7343)** or by e-mail at info@sdge.com. You can also visit our Web site at www.sdge.com. SDG&E is committed to providing you with safe, reliable energy and exceptional customer service.



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Planning for tomorrow.®*

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