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Carbon Monoxide – Winter’s Quiet Killer

Proper ventilation and installation of detectors in homes are life-saving measures

(MADISON) – As part of Winter Awareness Week (Nov. 8-12), Wisconsin Emergency Management’s ReadyWisconsin campaign is urging families to take preventative steps to minimize the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Nearly half of all accidental carbon monoxide (CO) deaths occur during the winter. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), carbon monoxide is the leading cause of accidental poisoning deaths in the United States, with more than 20,000 people visiting the emergency room and nearly 500 killed each year from overexposure to the gas.

“Families should have a CO detector on each level of their home, especially near the bedrooms,” said Tod Pritchard, Preparedness Coordinator for ReadyWisconsin.

Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless, tasteless gas that can be generated by improper ventilation of furnaces; generators; gasoline, propane or charcoal-burning devices; car exhaust systems; and wood-burning stoves. Breathing the gas displaces the oxygen in the blood and can cause death in minutes at high levels.

Symptoms of overexposure to CO are often mistaken for the flu and include headaches; fatigue; dizziness; shortness of breath/chest pain; nausea/vomiting; and confusion. If you experience any of these symptoms or your CO detector sounds an alarm, you should head outside immediately for fresh air and call 911.

For more information on CO poisoning, visit the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/co/.

ReadyWisconsin is a campaign from Wisconsin Emergency Management with a mission to prepare individuals, families and businesses for emergencies and disasters. For additional winter safety tips, visit <http://ReadyWisconsin.wi.gov> or follow us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/ReadyWisconsin) and Twitter (www.twitter.com/ReadyWisconsin).

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