



Carbon Monoxide Safety



An Important Message from Your Volunteers of the Westbury Fire Department

The Westbury Fire Department, reminds all our residents to be sure to check your detector, and know what to do in the event of an emergency.

Each year more than 1,700 Americans die as a result of Carbon Monoxide poisoning. Another 10,000 are treated or hospitalized in the same time period.

It's the number 1 source of accidental poisoning.

The Westbury Fire Department responds to many calls for Carbon Monoxide alarms sounding. Most of these alarms are due to a malfunction, low battery, improper installation, and/or an overly sensitive alarm. However, each year, in Westbury alone, we find situations where there has been a build-up of carbon monoxide that could have become life threatening if not for detection.

This time of the year presents a significant risk increase as heating systems are now operating in the homes, and the cooler temperatures force homeowners to close the windows making their homes more airtight than warmer seasons.

The Westbury Fire Department would like our community to become more familiar with the dangers of this silent killer.

For this reason we have put together this information to give our residents the best possible knowledge in recognizing such an emergency.

We hope you will find this informative, and also hope that you carry this knowledge throughout your everyday life.

WHAT IS CARBON MONOXIDE (CO)? Carbon Monoxide is a colorless, odorless, tasteless deadly gas. Because you can't see, smell, or taste it, carbon monoxide can kill you without warning.

WHERE IS IT MOST COMMONLY FOUND? Carbon Monoxide is most commonly found in the incomplete combustion of fuels such as natural gas, fuel oil, propane, kerosene, coal, and wood.

HOW CAN MY FAMILY COME IN CONTACT WITH IT? Carbon Monoxide risks to family members are most common in the home where the gases can accumulate due to a poorly vented or blocked chimney flu, (mechanical heating system or fireplace), improperly adjusted oil burners, a car running in an attached garage, and so on.

HOW CAN IT HARM MY FAMILY? Carbon monoxide can be dangerous at many different levels of concentration. Very small amounts over a long period of time, or large concentrations over a short period of time, can cause illness and/or death. The gas is measured in Parts Per Million or PPM's. The higher the number is, the greater the risk.

HOW WILL WE KNOW IF IT IS PRESENT? The Westbury Fire Department urges every residence to have at least one working Carbon Monoxide detector on each level of the home to alert all family members. Other more personal symptoms may include headaches, dizziness, shortness of breath, fatigue, and nausea, and an increase in comfort when not in the home. Another scenario that is rarely talked of by professionals is the link to exhaust, commonly from an oil burner blow back, or car exhaust. Although we stress you cannot taste or smell Carbon Monoxide, rest assured, if you had an odor from the oil burner or a vehicles exhaust has entered the home, YOU are being exposed to some level of Carbon Monoxide. In any case, use your family's exit plan, account for all members, and notify the Westbury Fire Department.

WHAT CAN I DO TO PREVENT ITS PRESENCE? The Westbury Fire Department urges all homeowners to have your heating system professionally checked at the beginning and the end of each heating season. It is recommended that your chimney flues be cleaned annually by a licensed and certified contractor. Your chimney tops should be capped with an approved animal resistant cage. Look for the warning signs such as excessive smoke from the chimney, or excess soot buildup that indicates an improperly working furnace. A puff back odor, or a burner sounding sluggish are all contributing factors. These situations never get better on their own, and require a qualified serviceman.

YOUR WFD RESPONSE: The Westbury Fire Department is fully trained to respond to your Carbon Monoxide Emergency. Your call will prompt members specifically equipped with highly sensitive Carbon Monoxide detectors. In the event you actually have a real emergency, firefighters are trained to locate the source, eliminate the source, and exhaust all the gases from your home. 24 hours a day 7 days a week, the Westbury Fire Department is ready for the next emergency.

ABOUT YOUR DETECTOR: Over the years, the Westbury Fire Department has responded to many alarms that turned out to be a malfunction of the detector. Whereas your call will be considered an emergency until deemed otherwise, there are a few important things each homeowner should know about their detector.

First, upon purchase and installation, read your instructions carefully to know more about what to expect of your detector.

Next, please keep your manufacturer's instructions in a safe place for immediate reference.

Your instruction booklet contains much information about how your detector operates. For example, there have been many instances where Jericho volunteers arrive at a residence and find the display as "l o B". Where a person may be concerned that this is a reading of 108 Parts Per Million (PPM), it can actually be a code for Low Battery. (Lo B).

Most of today's detectors are equipped with 3 digit LED readout that gives the homeowner piece of mind seeing all zeros. (000). although we do not recommend any one detector manufacturer over another, this type is the most successful and easiest to troubleshoot during an emergency.

Last, be sure you are familiar with the life of your detector. Information in your owners manual will give you a lifespan of the detector itself that will need to be discarded after a period of time regardless of the battery condition.

On behalf of the volunteer Officers and Members of the Westbury Fire Department, we thank you for taking time out from your busy day to review this valuable information.