

# CARBON MONOXIDE IS A HIGHLY POISONOUS GAS THAT HAS NO COLOUR, TASTE OR SMELL

Carbon Monoxide – Be Alarmed! is the national campaign to reduce the number of deaths and injuries caused by carbon monoxide. This brochure explains the nature and scale of the dangers posed by this poisonous gas and sets out the campaign's mission to save many needless deaths and injuries.

For more information about this campaign and about how to stay safe please visit [www.co-bealarmed.co.uk](http://www.co-bealarmed.co.uk)

Spokespeople, materials for campaign supporters and information for the media are available through our campaign office: **020 7492 0999** or email [campaign@co-bealarmed.co.uk](mailto:campaign@co-bealarmed.co.uk)

This campaign is run by Energy UK on behalf of British Gas, EDF Energy, E.ON, npower, ScottishPower and SSE, in partnership with the Dominic Rodgers Trust. It is supported by a wide range of charities and other organisations.



## WHY BE ALARMED?

Too many people in the UK die or become seriously ill from carbon monoxide poisoning – incidents that could be prevented if they had greater awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide, had their appliances serviced regularly and fitted an audible carbon monoxide alarm.

This poisonous gas is produced when appliances are incorrectly fitted, badly repaired or poorly maintained or if flues, chimneys or vents are blocked. Gas, oil and solid fuels such as coal, coke and wood can all produce carbon monoxide.

All appliances – including stoves, fires, boilers and water heaters – should therefore be serviced and checked annually by a registered engineer. In the case of gas this should be carried out by a Gas Safe registered engineer. Gas Safe Register replaced CORGI in Great Britain and the Isle of Man on 1 April 2009.



**Adele Forbes lost her eight year old son, McCauley, and her grandparents when carbon monoxide was produced by a faulty boiler at their home in Pontllanfraith, South Wales. Her story is harrowing and a reminder to everyone about the lives that can be saved with just one audible alarm.**

## THE SCALE OF THE PROBLEM

According to the Department of Health, 50 people died from carbon monoxide poisoning last year and another 4,000 were treated in hospital. However, the true number is likely to be much higher as the early symptoms can easily be mistaken for flu or tiredness. Even if not fatal, carbon monoxide poisoning can leave lasting problems such as brain damage.

Worryingly, new research for this campaign suggests that just over three quarters of the population (77%) say that they are 'not worried' about a carbon monoxide leak in their home.

## SERVICING APPLIANCES

For protection all gas appliances should be installed by and serviced annually by a Gas Safe registered engineer. Oil and solid fuel appliances should also be serviced annually by appropriately qualified engineers.

To check if an engineer is Gas Safe registered visit [www.gassaferegister.co.uk](http://www.gassaferegister.co.uk) or call **0800 408 5500**. If you live in rented accommodation with gas appliances your landlord must provide you with proof that a Gas Safe registered engineer has safety-checked the appliances within the last 12 months. For solid fuel appliances, contact HETAS ([www.hetas.co.uk](http://www.hetas.co.uk) or **0845 634 5626**) and or oil appliances contact OFTEC ([www.oftec.co.uk](http://www.oftec.co.uk) or **0845 658 5080**).

## HAVING AN AUDIBLE ALARM

The latest Carbon Monoxide – Be Alarmed! research suggests that two thirds of the UK population are putting their households at risk because they do not have an audible carbon monoxide alarm.

The cost of a carbon monoxide alarm has dropped significantly in recent years to around £15 and they can be purchased at DIY stores and some supermarkets or can be bought directly from energy suppliers.

Only by taking both precautions of having an alarm and regularly servicing appliances will homes be fully protected.



**Stacey Rodgers suffered every parent's worst nightmare when her 10-year-old son Dominic died in 2004. He had been poisoned by carbon monoxide, which had seeped into his bedroom from a boiler flue positioned in a covered passageway between Stacey's home and the house next door.**

## KNOWING THE SYMPTOMS

Knowing the symptoms is your last line of defence, but the figures are worrying. Only 7% of people very confident that they would recognise the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning and surprisingly only one person in five realises that you can actually die from the poison.

There is also anecdotal evidence that suggests even healthcare professionals find it difficult to recognise the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning. To assist medical professionals in the diagnosis and management of carbon monoxide poisoning the Health Protection Agency and other stakeholders published a diagnostic algorithm in March 2009.

## WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

Internationally, there are examples of governments taking legislative action to promote the take-up of carbon monoxide alarms. For example, in many States in America, there are laws in place regarding the installation of carbon monoxide alarms. Closer to home, the Northern Ireland Executive has recently announced it will consider making it a legal requirement for alarms to be fitted in all new-builds.

As part of this campaign we are calling on the Government to make two key legislative changes:

### 1) In order to receive a gas safety certificate, landlords should have to provide tenants with a carbon monoxide alarm.

This is a simple mechanism to ensure that many of the most vulnerable members of society are offered the protection of a carbon monoxide alarm. The existing legal requirement for a gas safety certificate means that an appropriately qualified and registered installer checks the safety of gas appliances. This would require an amendment to the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 so that, in order for a gas safety certificate to be issued, landlords are required to provide an audible carbon monoxide alarm.

### 2) Every new home should be fitted with an audible carbon monoxide alarm.

To mirror the current requirement for a wired-in smoke alarm to be fitted in all new-build homes, Building Regulations should be amended to require an audible carbon monoxide alarm to be installed. This is a simple measure which will add no significant cost to homebuilders. Following a consultation exercise in 2008-9, the Government amended part J of the Building Regulations to require the provision of a carbon monoxide alarm when solid fuel appliances are installed. We believe this requirement should be extended, via the next review of the Building Regulations, to cover the installation of all fuel appliances.