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Be fire smart with home heating

With the cooler weather upon us, the Campbell River Fire Department is issuing a reminder about the dangers of carbon monoxide and providing some safety tips around heating appliances and power outages.

Carbon monoxide is a colourless, odourless and tasteless gas created by burning fuels such as kerosene, gasoline, wood, coal, natural gas, propane, oil and methane.

It is also known as the “silent killer” because it can cause deadly results. Carbon monoxide poisoning is caused by incomplete burning of fuel in furnaces or other heating appliances, portable generators, water heaters, cooking appliances, or car engines left running in garages. Extremely high levels of poisoning can be fatal, causing death within minutes. Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning may include headache, nausea and drowsiness. These symptoms are often mistaken for the flu and ignored. Prolonged exposure to carbon monoxide can cause confusion and lead to brain damage.

Recommended precautions inside the home:

- Install and maintain carbon monoxide alarms in your home to provide an early warning.
- Follow manufacturer’s instructions for placement and mounting height.
- Have fuel burning heating equipment (fireplaces, furnaces, water heaters, wood stoves, space heaters, portable heaters) and chimneys inspected by a professional every year.
- Never use your stove top or oven to heat your home.

Recommended precautions outside the home:

- Remove vehicles from the garage immediately after starting. Do not “warm up” the vehicle in the garage.
- Never run a vehicle or non-electric engines or motors indoors, even if garage doors are open.
- Make sure the exhaust pipe of a running vehicle is not blocked with snow, ice or anything else.
- During and after a snowstorm, make sure vents for the dryer, furnace, stove and fireplace are clear of snow.
- Only use barbecue grills outside, away from all doors, windows, vents and other building openings. Never use them inside the home or the garage, even if the doors are open.
- Use portable generators outdoors in well ventilated areas away from all doors, windows, vents and other building openings to prevent exhaust fumes from entering the home.
- Test carbon monoxide alarms at least once a month and replace alarms according to the manufacturer’s recommendations, if they fail to respond correctly when tested, or if they are older than five to seven years.
- If your carbon monoxide alarm sounds, immediately move everyone inside the home to a fresh air location and call 9-1-1.

If you burn candles:

- Never leave burning candles unattended. Blow out all candles when you leave the room or go to bed.
- Support candles in non-combustible holders, and keep the flame away from combustible materials.
- Don’t burn candles all the way down to the bottom of the holder or container.
- Never burn candles if medical oxygen is used in the home.
- Avoid burning candles in the bedroom and other areas where people may fall asleep.

In the event of a power outage, have flashlights and battery-powered lighting ready to use and where they can be easily found in the dark. Avoid using candles and keep matches and lighters out of the reach of children.

During any outage, try to reduce the amount of power the electricity supplier needs to restore to your home by turning off circuit breakers to major appliances and lights. If you have electric heat, lower the setting. This will help prevent an overload outage caused by the initial burst of power required to get all the lights and appliances going again. When power resumes, wait 10 to 15 minutes before turning everything back on. Leave one light on inside the home to indicate when power is back on again.

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Contact: Thomas Doherty, Deputy Fire Chief

250-286-6266