

Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service

Carbon Monoxide Awareness (Tents/ Caravans / Camping Vans / Motor Homes)

Thinking of Touring / Camping Safely this summer?

Are you aware that Carbon Monoxide (CO) is a poisonous gas produced by incomplete burning of carbon-based fuels, including gas, oil, wood and coal.

At the time of producing this article, statistics to date show that in 2013, 6 people have already died from <http://www.co-gassafety.co.uk/> Carbon Monoxide poisoning in Caravans, with a further 2 whilst having a holiday break on a boat. During 2012, an increased number of people died either in caravans or whilst camping by taking BBQ's into awnings, pods and tents to cook or keep warm. A variation in age, race and culture but the outcome the same.

In 2011 following a recent analysis the NHS revealed the hidden toll, each year, from this dangerous invisible gas:

- 4,000 people go to A&E
- 200 people are hospitalised
- there are around 50 deaths in England and Wales

ARE YOU AT RISK?

If you use a gas cooker or stove whilst **camping or caravanning** then you need to ensure that your appliances/equipment has been maintained properly and ideally serviced. Covering air vents or snuggling into a confined space within the vicinity of poorly maintained equipment and by closing windows to keep warm you are unknowingly preventing poisonous fumes from escaping. **Maintain good ventilation.**

The same applies to people that use a **campervan or motorhome** but with an added risk when using a portable **petrol driven generator** that produces exhaust fumes. **Be aware of wind direction.**

With the ever evolving **tent or side curtained gazebo** becoming so much warmer, waterproof and draft proof, unfortunately this has potentially created a possible catch net for the CO fumes. **You only require an environment with a 2% mixture of CO over a period of 3-4 minutes to result in potentially fatal consequences.**

With the warmer weather, comes the obligatory **BBQ** used at home or during outdoor leisure. Whether gas fuelled or charcoal, both have the potential to seriously harm or kill from the product of CO. Key rules to the safe use of BBQ's are the siting and ensuring wind the direction is blowing CO products away from your congregational area. No matter how damp or miserable the weather becomes **NEVER** move a BBQ into an enclosed area with restricted air movement including **awnings and conservatories!**

Portable charcoal BBQ's can still produce CO even when the coals are cool enough to touch.

Symptoms to look out for include:

Headache, feeling sick (nausea) and dizziness, you may also feel tired, confused, some people are sick (vomit) and have abdominal pain. This may also lead to loss of memory and problems with co-ordination

The symptoms of CO poisoning can resemble those of food poisoning and the flu because they have similar symptoms. **However, unlike flu, CO poisoning does not cause a high temperature.**

If you suspect that you or a friend is suffering from the effects of Carbon Monoxide poisoning then your aim is to vacate the premise/affected area immediately. Call for the fire and ambulance service from a safe environment clear from the affected area. Do not return until the property has been checked and given the all clear by the fire service and effected equipment has been isolated or repaired. So be on the lookout for these potentially life threatening signs.

Carbon-based fuels are safe to use, it is only when the fuel does not burn properly that excess CO is produced, which is poisonous. **Have you had your camping / caravan equipment serviced to ensure it's safe to use?**

Contact your local camping / caravan / motorcaravan dealer and ask if they provide a means to carry out a service of your gas fuelled equipment. There are also some caravan servicing companies that will do an onsite check and maintenance.

Carbon Monoxide Alarms are light, can be portable and available from hardware stores, caravan/camping leisure centres and leading super markets. Prices range from £12 - £55. Take time to read the instructions as differing designs may vary in use for max benefit.

A CO ALARM PROTECTS LOVED ONES FROM HARM– AN ABSOLUTE MUST AMONGST YOUR CAMPING ESSENTIALS!

If you wish for further information then please view the following websites:

- www.caravanandcamping.com

www.co-awareness.com.uk

www.gassaferegister.co.uk/learn/carbon_monoxide_kills.aspx

www.nhs.uk/conditions/carbon-monoxide-poisoning

- www.co-gassafety.co.uk



Carbon monoxide poisoning - NHS Choices.aspx.mht