

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Paul Haan
Healthy Homes Coalition of West Michigan
(616) 241-3300 (office)
(616) 734-9443 (cell)

Carbon Monoxide Kills: More Than Half of Carbon Monoxide Poisonings Occur During the Winter Months

GRAND RAPIDS – West Michigan residents are at increased risk of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning during the winter heating season due to malfunctioning furnaces and non-vented appliances. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), more than half (53.5%) of CO exposures occur between November and February.

The Healthy Homes Coalition of West Michigan is alerting homeowners to take precaution during the winter months by providing safety tips and installing free CO detectors in target neighborhoods.

Carbon monoxide is the leading cause of accidental poisoning death in the United States according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. While CO poisoning is preventable, it is responsible for approximately 15,000 emergency department visits and nearly 500 deaths annually in the United States (these figures do not include exposures due to fires and intentional poisonings).

The Healthy Homes Coalition provides four safety tips.

- 1) **Inspect Your Furnace.** Homeowners should have their furnace inspected annually because furnaces are the number one source of accidental CO exposure.
- 2) **Maintain & Vent Appliances.** Other fuel-burning appliances (such as stoves and ovens, clothes dryers, and water heaters) should be properly maintained and ventilated. Homeowners should call a professional whenever installing fuel-burning appliances and when concerned about the appliance's performance.
- 3) **Never Heat with the Oven.** Alternative sources of heat can be dangerous. Use electric heaters only in strict accordance with manufacturer's instructions and never leave an electric heater unattended. Never heat the home with the stove or oven.
- 4) **Install an Alarm.** Every home should have at least one working carbon monoxide alarm.

The Healthy Homes Coalition is offering free CO alarm installations for families with children fourteen years of age and younger in the cities of Grand Rapids, Kentwood, and Wyoming thanks to a grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). For more information, call (616) 241-3300.

Carbon monoxide is a clear, odorless, tasteless gas that starves the body of oxygen. At low levels, it can make people sick with flu-like symptoms. At high levels it can kill.

“Carbon monoxide is a silent and invisible killer,” said Paul Haan, Executive Director at the Healthy Homes Coalition. “People die because they do not have a simple, affordable life-saving alarm in their home. A carbon monoxide alarm is inexpensive, commonsense protection.”

The Healthy Homes Coalition of West Michigan is an independent, non-profit organization based in Grand Rapids that is improving children’s health and wellbeing by eliminating harmful housing conditions. For more information about the Healthy Homes Coalition or carbon monoxide, visit www.healthyhomescoalition.org/carbon-monoxide.

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Photo opportunities available upon request.