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MDHHS urges residents to protect against carbon monoxide poisoning as winter nears

LANSING, Mich. – The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) is reminding everyone to be safe from the danger of carbon monoxide poisoning during the cold weather and heating season. To highlight the issue, Governor Snyder has proclaimed this week, October 17 – 24, as Carbon Monoxide Safety and Awareness Week in Michigan.

Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless, and tasteless gas that kills more than 500 Americans each year. Michigan averaged 27 carbon monoxide-related deaths per year for the years 2010-2014, the most recent years of available data.

Carbon monoxide is produced by all fuel-burning devices. Faulty furnaces and water heaters are common causes of the carbon monoxide poisonings. The warning signs include flu-like symptoms such as headache, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, drowsiness, and confusion.

"Carbon monoxide is difficult to detect and potentially deadly, however, carbon monoxide poisoning is completely preventable," said Dr. Eden Wells, chief medical executive at MDHHS. "Now is the time to ensure that furnaces and water heaters are working properly, and that carbon monoxide detectors are installed and have fresh batteries. If you suspect you have been exposed to carbon monoxide, leave the area immediately and seek medical attention."

Residents can reduce the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning by following these simple steps:

- Never use generators, grills, camp stoves, or other fuel-burning devices inside your home, basement, or garage.
- If you use a generator, be sure it is located outside at least 25 feet away from your home.
- Park your car outside while it is warming, never in the garage. Running a car in an enclosed garage can create deadly levels of carbon monoxide in minutes.

For more information about carbon monoxide poisoning and poisoning prevention, visit www.michigan.gov/carbonmonoxide.

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