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Increase in carbon monoxide poisoning amidst extreme winter temperatures

Knox County – Tenn. - With the extreme winter temperatures over the past week, there's been an increase in reported cases of carbon monoxide poisoning. At least two of these cases are related to operating generators or heaters in enclosed spaces.

"With the frigid temperatures we've seen recently, we know it can be tempting to find a way to heat your home any way that you can," said Director of Communicable and Environmental Diseases and Emergency Preparedness Roberta Sturm. "However, when you bring portable generators inside, you're putting yourself and those in your home at risk."

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless gas that can be fatal inside enclosed, semi-enclosed or poorly ventilated areas. Symptoms of CO poisoning include dizziness. headaches, nausea, and shortness of breath.

Common sources of carbon monoxide are gas and propane heaters, gas and diesel-powered generators, natural gas appliances, woodstoves, and fires.

To keep you and your family safe, follow these recommendations:

- Install battery-operated CO detectors near every sleeping area in your home. Check these detectors regularly to be sure they are functioning properly.
- Have your furnace inspected every year.
- Never use a generator inside your home or garage, even if doors and windows are open.
- Only use generators outside, more than 20 feet away from your home, doors, and windows.
- Have your chimney checked or cleaned every year.
- Never use a gas range or oven for heating.

About Knox County Health Department

The first health department in Tennessee to achieve national voluntary accreditation by the Public Health Accreditation Board, the Knox County Health Department (KCHD) is dedicated to ensuring the conditions in which every resident can be healthy. For more information, visit http://www.knoxcounty.org/health.

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