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PRESS RELEASE

Carbon monoxide poisoning: adopting the right practices can save lives

As winter approaches, bringing its share of bad weather, the risk of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning increases. This is linked to the use of non-electric heating appliances, equipment such as electricity generators and water pumps in the event of power cuts or flooding, or any appliance with a combustion engine.

Every year, **around 3000 people** in France suffer accidental carbon monoxide poisoning, and **about a hundred die as a result**. This gas is particularly dangerous because it is **invisible, odourless and non-irritating so cannot be detected by our senses**. Serious poisoning can lead to coma or even death in just a few minutes.

Multiple causes that can often be avoided

CO poisoning is most often due to the **incorrect use of appliances or a failure to maintain** equipment. The main identified causes are:

- **appliances connected to a flue** (boilers, water heaters, stoves or fireplaces) that have not been properly serviced or adjusted;
- improperly used **mobile appliances**: space heaters, braziers, barbecues, electricity generators and water pumps, as well as other appliances powered by an internal combustion engine;
- motor vehicles (especially cars) whose engine has been left running in an unventilated space such as a garage;
- appliances running on **fuels** such as gas, wood, coal, oil, butane, propane, petrol or other petroleum-based fuels.

Take action to limit the risks

In homes, it is essential to have the heating and hot water installations and flues **checked and serviced by a qualified professional at least once a year** and before using them/switching them on again. This applies to both primary and secondary residences.

Rooms should also be aired for at least ten minutes a day, even in cold weather, to ensure that the air is renewed regularly. Ventilation systems (controlled mechanical ventilation, air vents, grilles) should be kept in good working order and must never be obstructed.

In the case of mobile appliances, the manufacturer's instructions should always be followed, only the recommended fuel should be used and **auxiliary space heaters should not be used for more than two hours at a time**. Cooking appliances (hotplates, ovens, gas stoves) must never be used for heating rooms.

Similarly, **electricity generators, braziers and barbecues must never be used in enclosed spaces** (homes, garages, cellars, camper vans, etc.) **or placed outside near doors, windows or air vents**. In the event of flooding or storms, **combustion engine-driven water pumps or electricity generators should never be used indoors**.

Vehicles (especially cars) should never be left in an enclosed space with their engine running.

Recognise the symptoms and take prompt action

The first signs of poisoning tend to be **headaches, fatigue, nausea, vomiting or dizziness**. These symptoms should never be ignored, especially if they appear rapidly while fuel-burning appliances are present, and affect several people/pets simultaneously in the same place.

In the event of suspected poisoning:

- **air the room immediately** by opening doors and windows;
- **switch off the combustion appliance** if possible;
- **evacuate the premises without delay**;
- **call the emergency services**: 15 (ambulance), 18 (fire brigade), 112 (European emergency number) or 114 for the hearing impaired, or call a **poison control centre** on **+33 (0)1 45 42 59 59** (emergency number available 24/7). CO poisoning victims may need to be hospitalised.

A renewed information campaign

These simple and essential actions are reiterated in the leaflet "[*Protect yourself from carbon monoxide poisoning*](#)" (in French).

In addition, the [Consomag](#) programme produced by the National Consumer Institute (INC), in partnership with the Directorate General for Health, has been relaying these prevention messages on French national public television channels since 10 November 2025. The programme is also available online via the [Consomag website](#).

A brochure (in French) has also been made available to the general public: [Understand the dangers of carbon monoxide](#)

Find out more:

- [Ministry of Health, Families, Autonomy and the Disabled](#)
- [Santé Publique France information resources](#)

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