**About Carbon Monoxide**

* Carbon monoxide is often referred to as the **silent killer**.
* It’s a serious health threat that becomes more prevalent during the winter months when people stay indoors, and this invisible, odorless gas can easily build up to deadly levels unnoticed.
* Even small, yet long-term exposure, can harm human health.
  + Carbon monoxide poisoning can lead to heart failure and stroke as well as memory and cognitive impairments.
  + Carbon monoxide poisoning is known among medical professionals as a clinical chameleon because it can be hard to diagnose, often triggering the same symptoms as the flu, COVID-19, and even some neurological diseases.

**Carbon Monoxide in North Dakota**

* A [2023 study](https://neilhampson.com/uploads/3/4/7/0/34704948/2023_co_mortality_in_us_2015-2021_clin_toxicol.pdf) showed that from 2016-2023, North Dakota ranked 2nd (behind Alaska) in accidental carbon monoxide deaths per capita.
* From the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services:
  + From 2009 to 2014 there were 240 deaths due to CO poisoning in ND
  + Among ND residents over the age of 65, carbon monoxide poisoning was the leading substance resulting in death from 2009 to 2014.

**Prevention**

* Install carbon monoxide alarms in each level of your home and check batteries annually.
* Home alarms are “life safety” alarms, but you can choose a more sensitive detector that will display real-time carbon monoxide levels to help protect against low-level, health-harming poisonings. It’s also portable so you can take it with you as you travel to Airbnbs and hotels.
* Have a trained professional with a carbon monoxide detector inspect chimneys, gas furnaces and other home equipment each year.
* Routinely check your exhaust vents to ensure they are not blocked by debris or snow.
* Never allow vehicles to idle in a garage or structure, even with the door open.
* If using a gas generator, place it 20 ft away from the home when in use.
* Upgrade to electric equipment that doesn’t directly burn fuel for heat, such as electric heat pump HVAC systems and water heaters.