



St. Lawrence County Public Health Department

Jolene Munger, MPH, MA ■ Public Health Director
80 State Highway 310, Suite 2 ■ Canton, New York 13617-1476
Phone: (315) 386-2325 ■ Fax: (315) 386-2203

Press Release

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Contact: **Miranda Corbine**
mcorbine@stlawco.org
315-386-2325

Carbon Monoxide Hauntings

St. Lawrence County Public Health urges homeowners to ensure their homes are safe from carbon monoxide leaks

Almost 4 in 10 Americans believe in haunted houses but did you know that what might seem like ghostly activity can actually be the result of carbon monoxide poisoning? Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless, tasteless gas that is produced by fuel-burning appliances. Malfunctioning and improperly ventilated equipment may allow the gas to build up to unsafe levels and without a CO alarm, it is impossible to detect. Carbon monoxide is sometimes referred to as the “silent killer” because every year over 400 people across the US die from accidental CO poisoning. At lower levels, carbon monoxide leaks can cause headaches, confusion, blurred vision, hallucinations, and feelings of dread. Before the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning were well known, its effects were often blamed on ghosts. Fortunately, carbon monoxide poisoning is entirely preventable with proper installation, ventilation, and maintenance of fuel-burning appliances.

Prevent Carbon Monoxide Leaks in Your Home:

- Install CO detectors outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home
- After snowstorms, ensure that vents are clear of snow
- Service heating systems, water heaters, or any other gas, oil, or coal-burning appliances yearly
- Inspect fireplace, chimney and flues before each heating season
- Never use a gas range or oven for heating
- Never run engines in an enclosed garage - let the car idle outside
- Use generators outdoors, away from windows, doors, and vents
- Only use gas or charcoal grills outside
- Change your air filters regularly to increase airflow and prevent blockages

“While it may seem as though there are dark forces at work, it’s probably just a faulty furnace.”

~Pacific Heating Cooling

If you believe your home to be haunted, ask yourself if you have symptoms associated with carbon monoxide poisoning:

- Do your symptoms occur only in the house?
- Do your symptoms only occur during the heating season?
- Are other people or pets in the household ill?

If so, you may have a carbon monoxide leak in your home.

Further Information

<https://www.cdc.gov/dotw/carbonmonoxide/index.html>

<https://pacificheatingcooling.com/2018/12/27/carbon-monoxide-hauntings-co-furnace-safety/>

<https://www.npr.org/2017/06/23/533791342/carrie-poppy-can-science-reveal-the-truth-behind-ghost-stories>

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