Consumer Product Safety Commission

CPSC Warns of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning with Camping Equipment

CPSC Document #5008

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) warns consumers that each year there are about 30 deaths and 450 injuries because of carbon monoxide poisoning from the use of portable camping heaters, lanterns, or stoves inside tents, campers, and vehicles. Follow these guidelines to prevent this colorless, odorless gas from poisoning you and your family.

- Do not use portable heaters or lanterns while sleeping in enclosed areas such as tents, campers, and other vehicles. This is especially important at high altitudes, where the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning is increased.
- Know the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning: headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, sleepiness, and confusion. Carbon monoxide reduces the blood's ability to carry oxygen. Low blood oxygen levels can result in loss of consciousness and death.
- See a doctor if you or a member of your family develops cold or flu-like symptoms while camping. Carbon monoxide poisoning, which can easily be mistaken for a cold or flu, is often detected too late.
- Alcohol consumption and drug use increase the effects of carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Carbon monoxide is especially toxic to mother and child during pregnancy, infants, the elderly, smokers, and people with blood or circulatory system problems, such as anemia, or heart disease.