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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Putnam County Department of Health Issues Carbon Monoxide Alert:
When The Furnace Kicks On—Be Sure Poisonous Gas Is Not Leaking Out

Brewster, NY, January 11, 2012—With frigid outside temperatures, people shut and seal their windows, and turn up their heat, and during these cold winter months carbon monoxide (CO) poisonings rise. Every year nearly 500 Americans are killed, and over 20,000 injuries occur, due to carbon CO poisoning. In fact, this odorless and colorless gas is the leading cause of poison-related deaths in the U.S. Most incidents occur in residential homes and usually faulty furnaces or motor vehicles are to blame.

Like other serious injuries however, CO poisoning is both predictable and preventable, with information and the proper precautions. In addition to furnaces and automobiles, CO is emitted from stoves, portable generators, gas ranges, charcoal, firewood and other products when they malfunction or are used improperly.

Poisonings can occur both in emergency situations and in every day life. After snow storms or other severe weather events with power outages, people often use generators and portable heaters. In every day living, faulty home heating systems, including gas- and oil-burning furnaces, are more often the cause. In these cases, nearly half of the victims—49 percent—are asleep at the time of poisoning.

The number-one prevention tip to protect you and your family is to install CO detectors. Even residents with “all-electric homes,” often use CO-emitting devices such as generators, automobiles, gas dryers and fireplaces. CO detectors are an inexpensive solution to a potentially deadly problem. They are widely available at home and hardware stores and not difficult to install. Each comes with manufacturers’ instructions about

placement, usage and maintenance. Batteries typically should be changed twice a year.

The number-two prevention tip is to have your furnace serviced regularly by a professional. The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) recommends annual inspections and local gas and utility companies usually have similar recommendations.

Other important prevention tips include:

1. Never use a gas range or oven for warmth.
2. Never run generators in indoor spaces such as garages, basements, porches, (Place all generators at least 20 feet from a home. This is usually adequate to prevent CO from entering the home.)
3. Never start up or run any gasoline-powered engine (snow blowers, mowers, weed trimmers, chain saws, etc.) in an enclosed space.
4. Have fireplaces, oil and gas heat and hot water systems serviced annually.
5. Never use a stove or fireplace unless it is properly installed and vented.
6. Never use a charcoal or barbeque grill inside your home or garage.
7. Never run a car or motorcycle inside a garage attached to a house or in a detached garage with the garage door shut. Open the door to remove CO and other toxic gases in the exhaust.

CO is a tasteless, odorless, colorless gas, known as the “silent killer.” Symptoms of CO poisoning may include dizziness, shortness of breath, sleepiness, weakness, nausea and headache. If you suspect CO is leaking in your home or building, go outside immediately and call 911 from outside.

For further information, please visit:

New York State Department of Health

http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/emergency/weather/carbon_monoxide/

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/co/>

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