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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Putnam County Department of Health Issues Carbon Monoxide Alert:**  
*Carbon Monoxide Detectors Can Save Lives*

Brewster, NY —With frigid outside temperatures, people shut and seal their windows, turn up their heat, and carbon monoxide (CO) poisonings rise. Every year hundreds of Americans are killed, and thousands more injured, due to CO poisoning. In fact, this odorless, colorless, and tasteless gas, known as the “silent killer”, is the leading cause of poison-related deaths in the U.S. Most incidents occur in residential homes and are the result of faulty venting of a fuel burning device such as a furnace or automobile, though recent reported cases have involved larger community establishments.

Like other serious injuries, CO poisoning is both predictable and preventable, with information and the proper precautions. In addition to furnaces and automobiles, CO is emitted from malfunctioning or improperly used stoves, portable generators or space heaters, gas ranges, charcoal, firewood and other products. After snow storms or other severe weather events with power outages, people often use generators and portable heaters. In everyday living, faulty home heating systems, including both 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.

“Everyone interested in protecting their family should have a carbon monoxide detector in their home,” says Commissioner of Health Allen Beals, MD.

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. CO detectors come with manufacturers’ instructions about placement, usage and maintenance. For maximum protection, installing alarms on each level of your home is advised, with at least one near the sleeping area. Even residents with “all electric homes”, often use CO-emitting devices such as generators, automobiles, gas dryers and fireplaces. CO alarms should be tested monthly and 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 or 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 exhaust gases.
8. Never operate an unvented fuel burning appliance, such as a gas or kerosene heater, in any room where people are sleeping.

Initial symptoms of CO poisoning are flu-like and may include dizziness, shortness of breath, sleepiness, weakness, nausea and headache. If the early signs are ignored, a person could lose consciousness and be unable to escape danger. If you suspect CO is leaking in your home or building, go outside immediately and call 911 from outside.

The Health Department's mission is to improve and protect the health of the Putnam County community, composed of nearly 100,000 residents. Core services include community health assessment, disease surveillance and control, environmental health protection, family health promotion and health education. For more information, please visit our website at [www.putnamcountyny.com/health](http://www.putnamcountyny.com/health); or visit our social media sites on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/putnamhealth](http://www.facebook.com/putnamhealth) and Twitter @PutnamHealthNY.

**For further information, please visit:**

New York State Department of Health  
[http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/emergency/weather/carbon\\_monoxide/](http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/emergency/weather/carbon_monoxide/)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
<http://www.cdc.gov/co/>