

Carbon Monoxide (CO) HAZARDS from Wood Pellet Storage

Heating with wood can be an excellent way to keep your home or business warm. When heating with wood pellets, it is important that they be safely stored outside your home or business. If you use a woodstove, pellet stove, hydronic heater, boiler, or fireplace, the devices must be properly installed, vented, and serviced regularly to avoid potentially hazardous situations.

A chemical reaction that produces carbon monoxide (CO) gas can occur when wood pellets are stored. CO is a poisonous gas that can cause death and other harmful health effects if the pellets are not safely stored. It is invisible, tasteless, odorless, and non-irritating. The early symptoms of poisoning can be confused with a flu-like illness.

To minimize the risks of carbon monoxide poisoning, wood pellets should be safely stored in a separate structure outside your home or business. The outbuilding should have ventilation to the outside and any pellet delivery openings should not allow access to children. Signs should be posted at the storage area to warn everyone about potential carbon monoxide hazards.

Visit www.health.ny.gov for more information.



Wood pellets should be stored in an outbuilding with hazard signs.



What is carbon monoxide?

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a poisonous gas that can cause death and other harmful health effects. It is invisible, tasteless, odorless, and non-irritating. It is usually produced from burning fuels such as wood, oil, natural gas, propane, gasoline, and kerosene. Stored bulk wood pellets are another source of carbon monoxide so it is important to safely store pellets outside your home or business.

Symptoms of CO poisoning

Symptoms can be flu-like: nausea, headache, dizziness, shortness of breath, sleepiness, weakness, chest tightness, and confusion. In large amounts, CO can cause rapid loss of consciousness, brain damage, or death.

If you suspect CO poisoning

Get outside into the fresh air, open all windows and doors as you leave, and call the fire department from outside of the building.

Call 911 if you or someone else is experiencing symptoms or take the ill person to the emergency room. Tell the physician that you suspect CO poisoning.

Install CO alarms in your home

In New York State, Amanda's Law requires that CO alarms be installed in all homes (single and multifamily) that have any fuel-burning appliance or system. Alarms must be installed on each story where a sleeping area or a CO source is located. Carefully follow manufacturers' instructions for installation, maintenance, and battery/unit replacement.

For more information

Contact the New York State Department of Health's Bureau of Toxic Substance Assessment at 518-402-7800 or toll-free at 1-800-458-1158, or visit www.health.ny.gov for more information about health concerns from carbon monoxide.

Visit nyserdera.ny.gov/renewableheatny for more information on the benefits of high-efficiency, low-emission wood heating systems and participation details for NYSEERDA's Renewable Heat NY programs.