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**Town of Pagosa Springs  
Building Department**

## PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

### Attention Citizens of Pagosa Springs and Archuleta County

The Town of Pagosa Springs Building department has noticed some **DAMAGED ROOF VENTS** from snow this winter. **Damaged Plumbing Vents** can create excessive water vapor resulting in Mold, Dry Rot, Insulation Damage and of course Sewer Gases entering the living space. **Damaged Mechanical Heating Appliance Vents and/or Combustion Air Inlets and Vents** can compromised venting of flue gases from home & business heating appliances and may result in Carbon Monoxide entering into living and work spaces. We have compiled some helpful information as **Carbon Monoxide Poisoning** can result in severe illness and even death. We recommend you visually inspect roof and wall vents for any noticeable damage. If you suspect damage repair may be necessary.

#### Understanding the Risk of Carbon Monoxide (CO) Poisoning!

All people and animals are at risk for CO poisoning. Certain groups, unborn babies, infants, children, senior citizens, and people with chronic heart disease, anemia, or respiratory problems are more susceptible to its effects. Each year, more than 400 Americans die from unintentional CO poisoning, more than 20,000 visit the emergency room and more than 4,000 are hospitalized due to CO poisoning. Fatality is highest among Americans 65 and older. There are simple steps you can take to protect yourself from deadly carbon monoxide fumes.

#### What is Carbon Monoxide (CO) ?

Carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning can happen within a matter of minutes and is responsible for more deaths than any other single poison. Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless and toxic poison that can hurt you slowly in low levels, cause permanent neurological dysfunctions in moderate levels or take lives in higher levels. Because it is impossible to see, taste or smell the toxic fumes, CO can kill you before you are aware it is in your home. Protection against this deadly poison is as easy as installing a simple carbon monoxide detector in your home or office.

#### What are the symptoms of Carbon Monoxide (CO) Poisoning ?

Carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning can happen within a matter of minutes and is responsible for more deaths than any other single poison. The most common symptoms of CO poisoning are headache, dizziness, disorientation, confusion, weakness, fatigue, muscle pain, nausea, vomiting and chest pain. **Low levels** of carbon monoxide poisoning can be confused with other illness symptoms such as the flu and can often go undetected. **High levels** of CO inhalation can cause loss of consciousness and death. Unless suspected, CO poisoning can be difficult to diagnose because the symptoms mimic other illnesses. People who are sleeping or intoxicated can die from CO poisoning before ever experiencing symptoms. The effects of CO exposure can vary greatly from person to person depending on age, overall health and the concentration and length of exposure. Symptoms should be checked by a physician especially when more than one person in the home is showing symptoms.

#### How does Carbon Monoxide (CO) Poisoning work ?

Red blood cells pick up CO quicker than they pick up oxygen. If there is a lot of CO in the air, the body may replace oxygen in blood with CO. This blocks oxygen from getting into the body, which can damage tissues and result in death.

## Where does Carbon Monoxide (CO) come from ?

Carbon Monoxide is produced whenever fuel such as propane, natural gas, oil, kerosene, wood or charcoal is burned. CO gas can come from several sources: gas-fired appliances and heating units, charcoal grills, wood-burning furnaces or fireplaces and motor vehicles.

## What Actions to Take if My Carbon Monoxide (CO) Alarm Goes Off ?

What you need to do if your carbon monoxide alarm goes off depends on whether anyone is feeling ill or not.

If no one is feeling ill:

1. Silence the alarm.
2. Turn off all appliances and sources of combustion (i.e. furnace and fireplace).
3. Ventilate the house with fresh air by opening doors and windows.
4. Call a qualified professional to investigate the source of the possible CO buildup.

If illness or symptoms are a factor:

1. Evacuate all occupants immediately.
2. Determine how many occupants are ill and determine their symptoms.
3. Call '911' and when relaying information to the dispatcher, include the number of people feeling ill.
4. Do not re-enter the home without the approval of a fire department representative.
5. Call a qualified professional to repair the source of the CO.

## Protect Yourself and Your Family from carbon Monoxide (CO) Poisoning !!

- Install at least one carbon monoxide alarm with an audible warning signal on every floor in the home, near the sleeping areas and outside individual bedrooms. Make sure the alarm has been evaluated by a nationally recognized laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL). Carbon monoxide alarms measure levels of CO over time and are designed to sound an alarm before an average, healthy adult would experience symptoms. It is very possible that you may not be experiencing symptoms when you hear the alarm. This does not mean that CO is not present.
- Have a qualified professional check all fuel burning appliances, furnaces, venting and chimney systems at least once a year. Appliances deteriorate with time and can be a health risk to those who live in the home. The amount of CO produced while using fuel-burning appliances is usually not harmful. It becomes hazardous when appliances are used improperly or are not functioning adequately.
- Always have a qualified professional check out any vent damage, to determine the extent of the damage.
- Resist the temptation to plug up exterior wall openings within mechanical rooms with insulation. These openings provide necessary oxygen to the appliances for their safe and efficient operation. Additionally, check to make sure these wall openings are not buried with snow on the exterior of the building.
- Never use your range or oven to help heat your home and never use a charcoal grill or hibachi in your home or garage.
- Never keep a car running in a garage. Even if the garage doors are open, normal circulation will not provide enough fresh air to reliably prevent a dangerous buildup of CO.
- When purchasing an existing home, have a qualified technician evaluate the integrity of the heating and cooking systems, as well as the sealed spaces between the garage and house. The presence of a carbon monoxide alarm in your home can save your life in the event of CO buildup.
- Always use portable generators outdoors, away from doors, windows and vents. Never use in enclosed spaces.

The Town of Pagosa Springs Building Department has provided this guide as a public service announcement. More information is available through the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC). If you google 'Carbon Monoxide' there is a wealth of information also.

If you have additional questions you may contact the Town of Pagosa Springs Building Department at 264-4151 x225 or call a qualified Mechanical contractor if you detect a problem.