



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT**  
**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

January 20, 2011

**To: School Superintendents, Facility Directors and Nurses**

**From: Brian Toal, Supervisor, MPH**  
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The recent incident involving a leak of carbon monoxide (CO) gas at an elementary school in Waterbury resulting in over 30 students experiencing symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning has raised concerns over the lack of CO detectors in schools.

Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless gas produced by the incomplete burning of fossil fuels. Exposure to this gas produces symptoms that can range from those that mimic the flu (headache, fatigue, nausea, dizziness) to more severe symptoms that can result in death if undetected.

Potential sources of CO in the school include gas and oil furnaces, water heaters, and gas powered tools (shop). Installing a CO detector in the vicinity of each of these sources could prevent a tragedy. You may want to consider connecting the alarm to an existing electronic notification system.

**We are recommending that all schools install CO detectors.**

Superintendents and facilities directors should seek guidance regarding installation and location of CO detectors from their local building official or fire marshal.

CO detectors are relatively inexpensive (under \$50). They should be certified by Underwriter Laboratories (UL). It is advisable that the model be a plug-in with battery back up and a digital readout indicator. CO detectors have a sensor that should be replaced every 5 years or sooner.

For questions and/or more information refer to the following contacts and websites:

Amy Hanoian-Fontana, Connecticut Poison Control Center: 860-679-4422; [hanoian@uchc.edu](mailto:hanoian@uchc.edu)

Joan Simpson, CT Department of Public Health, 860-509-7740, [joan.simpson@ct.gov](mailto:joan.simpson@ct.gov)

**Resources:**

- CTDPH Carbon Monoxide: <http://www.ct.gov/dph/co>
- CT Poison Control Center:  
[http://poisoncontrol.uchc.edu/education/materials/brochures\\_tipsheets.htm](http://poisoncontrol.uchc.edu/education/materials/brochures_tipsheets.htm)
- CDC: <http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/carbonmonoxide.asp>
- Underwriters Laboratories, Inc.: *Carbon Monoxide Alarms Frequently Asked Questions:*

Cc: George A. Coleman, Acting Commissioner of Education