

**Communicable Disease Epidemiology
and Immunization Section**

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Health Advisory: Winter Storms and Carbon Monoxide Poisoning – 17 JAN 2012

Action requested:

- **Hospitals and healthcare providers should be aware of the potential for carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning during severe winter weather.**
- **Report CO King County poisoning cases immediately by calling 206-296-4774. Alternatively, reports can be submitted using on-line reporting 24 hours a day at <https://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/779871/COPoisoning>**

Heavy snow is predicted to fall in King County on Tuesday night, 1/17/12 and Wednesday, 1/18/12. Winds may increase by the end of the week, increasing the potential for power outages. Cases of CO poisoning occur from improper use of fuel burning devices. Common symptoms of CO poisoning include headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, dyspnea, chest pain, and confusion. Severe cases may have loss of consciousness, metabolic acidosis and death.

Laboratory criteria for confirmed diagnosis: A case in which carboxyhemoglobin concentration exists >5% in venous or arterial blood in nonsmokers and >10% in smokers. The typical range of carboxyhemoglobin concentrations in smokers is 6%-10%.

Criteria for suspected case: A physician diagnosis of CO poisoning based on signs, symptoms and history of exposure to a source of CO or link to a confirmed case.

Advice regarding diagnosis and management of CO intoxication is available 24/7 through WA Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222. Consultation regarding management of severe CO intoxication is available through the Virginia Mason Hyperbaric Medicine program, call 206-583-6543 to reach the hyperbaric medicine physician on-call.

When reporting CO poisoning, please have the following information:

- Patient name, date of birth (age if DOB unavailable), street address and ZIP code of residence
- Street address and ZIP code of location of poisoning if different from residence
- Initial carboxyhemoglobin level or indicate if testing was not done
- Source of CO (cooking stove, generator, etc)
- Type of fuel used (wood, charcoal, kerosene, oil, etc.)
- Disposition (e.g., admitted, ICU admission, died, discharged)
- Primary language spoken if not English
- Ethnicity and cultural group. Cultural group and ethnicity are important so that we can target appropriate prevention messages to affected groups in the community.
- Facility and name of person reporting

Shelter information Many cities have opened centers where people can stay warm during the day. Find center locations at <http://www.kingcounty.gov/safety/prepare>.

Information on CO poisoning including pictograms and fact sheets in multiple languages is available at: <http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/preparedness/disaster/carbon-monoxide.aspx>

To subscribe to receive e-mail and/or fax health alerts from Public Health, contact Maybelle Tamura at 206-296-4774 or Maybelle.tamura@kingcounty.gov