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**Illinois Poison Center Warns About “Silent Killer” Carbon Monoxide Poisoning**

**(Chicago) November 20, 2014** – As the weather gets colder, the Illinois Poison Center (IPC) is encouraging the public to be mindful of potential sources of carbon monoxide (CO), frequently called the “silent killer” because it cannot be seen, smelled or tasted. Carbon monoxide related poisonings increase in the winter due to the use of faulty or malfunctioning heaters and furnaces.

“Carbon monoxide poisoning can strike at any time of the year, but the risk increases significantly as the weather grows colder and people turn on the furnace or use other gas-powered appliances to heat their homes,” said IPC Operations Director, Carol DesLauriers, PharmD. “The presence of carbon monoxide in a home can easily go undetected in the absence of a functioning carbon monoxide detector, and with the early surge of bitter cold weather this year, we want all Illinoisans to be aware of the risks.”

Gas-powered heating appliances are the most common cause of carbon monoxide injury in the winter time. Other sources include oil, wood and gas furnaces and heaters, gas space heaters, charcoal grills, lanterns, gasoline-powered vehicles such as snow blowers, dryers, and gas stoves and ovens.

Carbon monoxide poisoning may result in flu-like symptoms including headaches, nausea, vomiting and dizziness. Severe poisonings may cause convulsions, unconsciousness, brain damage and even death.

Carbon monoxide poisoning usually occurs slowly over a period of several hours; however, at very high concentrations, carbon monoxide can kill in minutes.

“The IPC strongly recommends installing carbon monoxide detectors on each floor of your home, as required by Illinois law, and to have furnaces and other heating equipment inspected annually by professionals,” added DesLauriers.

If you believe you or someone you know is a victim of carbon monoxide poisoning, seek fresh air immediately. Once you or the victim is out of immediate danger, call the IPC at 1-800-222-1222 to receive treatment advice. In the event someone loses consciousness, please call 911 immediately.

IPC experts are available to answer questions and provide information and treatment advice 24 hours per day, 365 days per year, including holidays.

For more information about the carbon monoxide poisoning and prevention, please visit [www.illinoispoisoncenter.org/carbonmonoxide](http://www.illinoispoisoncenter.org/carbonmonoxide).

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The **Illinois Poison Center** is a non-profit health service that provides the people of Illinois with comprehensive and trusted information and treatment advice on potentially harmful substances via a free, confidential 24-hour helpline staffed by specially trained physicians, nurses and pharmacists.