

<b>CARBON MONOXIDE DOES NOT HAVE TO BE THE HIDDEN KILLER</b>	<b>6<sup>th</sup> March 2018</b>
<b>TO: ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE</b>	
<b>FOR INFORMATION</b>	

<b>Linkage to Council Strategy (2015-19)</b>	
<b>Strategic Theme</b>	Resilient, Healthy & Engaged Communities
<b>Outcome</b>	Safe occupation of residential accommodation
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Head of Health & Built Environment
<b>Cost: (If applicable)</b>	N/A

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council issue advice urging people that their coal, wood, fossil fuel and oil burning appliances such as boilers, heaters and cookers should be checked by an appropriately registered engineer.

Get chimneys inspected annually and swept, if required, by a registered technician.

As CO is a colourless, odourless and tasteless gas, it is difficult to detect. At high levels, CO poisoning can cause sudden collapse, loss of consciousness and death. Other symptoms include headaches, drowsiness, dizziness, chest pains, nausea and vomiting.

Check for warning signs if the appliances are not working correctly – for example, lazy yellow or orange flames instead of crisp blue ones, black marks on or around the appliance or too much condensation in the room.

Householders are strongly recommended to fit an audible CO alarm which meets European Standards, EN 50291 in their homes. These units can be purchased from most DIY retailers. However, the installation of an alarm should not replace regular servicing of all fossil fuel gas or wood burning appliances by a registered engineer.

In recent weeks, an officer from our Department responded to a complaint of smell in a private rental property in Coleraine town.

The house was occupied by a young family that were using an open fire as a means of home heating. The officer noted at the time of his visit that the occupant had no CO monitor and was burning high output fuel in an open fire. The next day he returned to the property and provided a CO detector which is distributed as part of our home safety checks. Within 50 minutes of his visit the alarm was triggered and the occupant called the officer to see what to do. He immediately advised her to call Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue (NIFRS).

The NIFRS confirmed when they responded to the incident that they took a reading and found 30 parts per million (ppm) in the living room, followed by a second reading of 45ppm in the same room and 67ppm in the front first floor bedroom which was utilised by the parent and 1 year old baby. It was determined the cause of the CO was a defective chimney flue.

The NIFRS confirmed that 27ppm over an 8 hour period could cause irreversible long term health issues and 130ppm over an 8 hour period could be fatal. Both, the 1 year old and 3 year old occupants were treated by ambulance (NIAS) and Causeway Hospital for carbon monoxide poisoning.

It is apparent that the quick thinking of our officer saved the lives of these occupants.

The family were advised to cease using the open fire; luckily they had oil fired central heating as a secondary means of heating. The landlord was also advised both verbally and in writing to have the chimney checked by a competent and registered engineer.

Subsequent discussions with the young family confirmed that they have vacated the private rental and moved elsewhere in the town of Coleraine.

This Department would like to stress to all householders, landlords, etc. to purchase and install CO monitors in their home and ensure their appliances are regularly checked, maintained and clean to ensure they are operating safely and effectively.