



CROYDON COUNCIL HOUSING

Guide to Carbon Monoxide Safety

What is carbon monoxide?

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a gas you can't see, smell, or taste. It's made when fuel like gas, oil, coal, or wood doesn't burn properly. That's why it's known as the “**silent killer.**” You won't know it's there unless you have a working CO alarm.

Could you be at risk?

Some gas appliances, like gas fires or back boilers, pull air from the room to work. If they don't get enough air or break down, they can release dangerous levels of carbon monoxide.

You're most at risk if:

- You sleep in a room with a gas fire or back boiler
- The appliance is left on overnight
- The room has poor ventilation or a blocked flue
- There's no carbon monoxide alarm installed



Appliances like wall-mounted boilers and water heaters with balanced or fan flues are safer, they're sealed and take air from outside.

Gas cookers don't have flues, so they also need good airflow to burn safely.

Warning signs to watch for

Look out for:

- Soot stains or discolouration around the appliance or flue
- Unusual amounts of condensation
- Orange or yellow flames (they should be blue)
- Pilot lights that go out.

Common causes of CO leaks

- Block chimneys, flues, or air vents.
- Faulty or unserviced gas appliances
- Using outdoor heaters and BBQs inside
- Plants or structures blocking outside flues

- Building conservatory or lean-to over flue outlets
- Poor ventilation due to draught excluders in double-glazing rooms where gas appliances are used

Symptoms of CO poisoning

If you or others in your home feel unwell, especially at the same time, take it seriously.

Symptoms include:

- Headaches
- Nausea or vomiting
- Confusion or blurred vision
- Dizziness or drowsiness
- Breathlessness
- Collapse or unconsciousness

If you suspect CO poisoning, **leave the property immediately** and seek medical help. Tell them you may have been exposed to carbon monoxide.

What to do in an emergency

- Evacuate the property
- Call the **National Gas Emergency Service** on **0800 111 999** (free and available 24/7) and follow their advice.
- Call us on **020 8726 6101** to report the issue for an emergency call out
- Wait outside for help to arrive, only go back in when told to do so.

Stay safe at home

Here's how to reduce risk and stay safe:

- Make sure carbon monoxide alarms are installed near bedrooms and gas appliances
- Allow a Gas Safe engineer access to carry out a gas service and safety check of your appliances and CO alarm every year
- Keep vents, flues, and chimneys clear
- Only use appliances the way they're meant to be used

