



MEDIA RELEASE

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BEWARE CARBON MONOXIDE – NEVER USE GENERATORS INDOORS

Energy Safe Victoria and WorkSafe are warning Victorians never to use petrol generators or outdoor gas appliances inside following the death of a man in Ferntree Gully on Sunday.

He is the second person to die from carbon monoxide poisoning in the past month. In the latest tragedy, the man was using a petrol generator indoors when he was overcome by carbon monoxide, while a Ballarat man died just four weeks ago while using a patio heater in his lounge room.

Victoria's Director of Energy Safety, Paul Fearon, said carbon monoxide (CO) was a silent killer and petrol generators or outdoor gas appliances should never be used in enclosed spaces.

"If an appliance uses petrol or is attached to a portable gas bottle then the golden rule is that it should never be used indoors," Mr Fearon said. "Petrol engines and outdoor gas appliances, such as barbecues and patio heaters, produce carbon monoxide. These are safe if they are used in the open air but can become lethal when used in enclosed spaces.

"Without proper ventilation, CO builds up quickly and can reach dangerous levels within minutes. And it's not only the risk of CO poisoning, if you use these appliances indoors they consume all the air and you risk death from oxygen depletion."

Mr Fearon said CO was known as a silent killer because you "can't see it, smell it or taste it".

"An average of one Victorian dies every year from CO poisoning but an even greater number of Victorians suffer debilitating, long-term health issues as a result," Mr Fearon said.

The symptoms of CO poisoning can include headaches, fatigue and nausea.

"CO poisoning is most commonly caused by faulty gas heaters and ESV recommends all gas heaters – including ducted heaters, room heaters and decorative log fires – are serviced at least once every two years by a registered or licensed gasfitter to ensure both the heater and flue are working properly," Mr Fearon said.

WorkSafe General Manager for Health and Safety Operations, Lisa Sturzenegger, said controlling risk in the workplace was essential, especially for activities that were less familiar.

"The best way to prevent carbon monoxide related deaths and illness in the workplace is to not allow the use of petrol, diesel or LPG powered appliances in confined spaces and enclosed or poorly ventilated areas.

"If an appliance must be run in an enclosed or poorly ventilated area, the exhaust pipe should be fitted with an extraction system that vents to the outside. Alternatively, mechanical ventilation should be used to introduce an adequate supply of fresh air. It may also be necessary to monitor carbon monoxide levels."

Ms Sturzenegger said fuel appliances needed to be well maintained and tuned to minimise carbon monoxide levels, and shouldn't be run unnecessarily.

"Workers need to be supervised and trained to use safe systems of work and they should be instructed on recognising the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning."

For further information:

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