



CITY OF HARRISONBURG
FIRE
DEPARTMENT

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For Immediate Release

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**FIREFIGHTERS RESCUE FAMILY OF SIX FROM
CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING**
Deadly Levels of Toxic Gas Found in Home

HARRISONBURG – A family of six, including three young children, were rescued this morning from a home filled with carbon monoxide (CO), a deadly, odorless gas.

At approximately 5:15 a.m., 9-1-1 operators received a call from inside a residence in the 1700 block of Buttonwood Court. Firefighters initially responded for an unknown medical emergency, but dispatch information suggested a serious situation in the home. Upon arrival, firefighters found at least two family members unconscious, and immediately removed all of the occupants from the home and began treatment. Four ambulances from the Harrisonburg Rescue Squad transported the patients to Sentara Rockingham Memorial Hospital.

Upon further investigation, lethal levels in excess of 1,000 parts per million (ppm) were found inside. Any amount above 35 ppm is considered harmful. Firefighters identified the source as a malfunctioning gas-fire appliance. Crews secured the gas, ventilated the structure and checked adjacent homes for the presence of CO. The residence did not have any functioning CO alarms.

“This could have been a terrible tragedy and I am extremely proud of our personnel who recognized the danger and took life-saving actions,” Interim Fire Chief Steve Morris said. “Fortunately, there were no fatalities, but it could have been a completely different outcome.”

The family is expected to recover. The Harrisonburg Fire Department is taking this opportunity to remind the public about the dangers of Carbon Monoxide.

- Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless, tasteless gas that cannot be detected by humans. It is approximately the same density as air so it lingers for a long period of time wherever it is produced. Carbon monoxide is an extremely dangerous gas. It produces symptoms that can mimic the flu or a cold including a headache, nausea, vomiting, lethargy, and confusion or dizziness. If multiple people inside your home are experiencing these symptoms it may

indicate the presence of the deadly gas. Seek help immediately.

- Every residence (home, apartment, condominium) that has any fossil fuel appliance should have a functioning carbon monoxide alarm on every level of the home. The appliances can include stoves, ovens, wood burning or pellet stoves, gas fireplaces, gas fueled water heaters and clothing dryers, kerosene heaters and of course furnaces that heat the home. An additional common cause is attributed to gasoline fired generators placed too close to residence intended to provide power.
- If an alarm sounds inside your home, evacuate immediately, call 9-1-1 and allow trained responders to find the problem.
- Carbon monoxide alarms can be hard wired with a battery back-up, simply run on battery power, or plug into an AC wall outlet with battery back-up. Check and change the battery regularly to ensure it is functioning properly.

If you cannot afford a CO alarm, the Harrisonburg Fire Department can provide assistance. Although heating season is the most prevalent time when CO emergencies occur, this incident is a reminder that such events can happen at any time. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), nearly 500 people die annually from accidental CO poisoning.

The Harrisonburg Fire Department is an ISO-Class II All-Hazards agency providing essential emergency and non-emergency life safety services to the public who live, work and travel in Harrisonburg. More information about the Fire Department is available on-line at www.harrisonburgva.gov/fire or on Facebook[®], Twitter[®] and Instagram[®].

The City of Harrisonburg is centrally located in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. It is home to almost 55,000 people. More information about the City of Harrisonburg is online at www.HarrisonburgVA.gov.



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