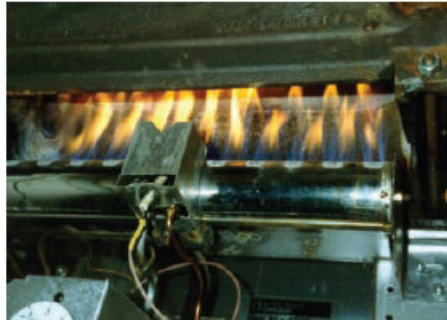


Carbon monoxide is the silent killer

Too many people die each year in the UK from gas-related carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning, and many become chronically ill.

With symptoms including headaches and drowsiness, it's often confused with flu.



A yellow/orange flame is evidence of possible carbon monoxide presence

Faulty appliances are often to blame, and put the young and elderly at most risk. But a simple, annual gas safety check with a CORGI Registered Installer could prevent the needless deaths of your kids, parents, and even yourself.



A healthy flame should be crisp, vibrant and blue

Carbon monoxide: The facts

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a chemical compound of carbon and oxygen. It is a colourless, odourless gas, and is poisonous to all warm-blooded animals.

CO is formed whenever carbon or substances containing carbon, such as gas, coal, wood or oil, are burned with an insufficient air supply. This is called incomplete combustion. When CO is inhaled, it prevents absorption of oxygen into the body and can result in oxygen starvation. This can have disastrous results, including death, depending on the concentration of CO in the body.

Symptoms of CO poisoning are similar to those of viral infections and include drowsiness, weakness, headaches, nausea and pains in the chest.

Possible causes of incomplete combustion include:

- Problems within the appliance itself, such as poor maintenance/servicing
- Incorrect installation/commissioning of the appliance
- Lack of ventilation around the appliance

All of these causes can be indicated by observation of the flame. A yellow/orange variable flame is evidence of possible carbon monoxide presence. A 'healthy' flame should be crisp, vibrant and blue.

Other indications of incomplete combustion are sooting/staining around the appliance and condensation in the room where the appliance is installed.

Carbon monoxide: The dangers

Our blood has a component called haemoglobin, which normally absorbs oxygen in our lungs and carries it to the rest of the body.

But haemoglobin absorbs CO 240 times more easily than it does oxygen. So when we inhale CO from the air, this gas, rather than the oxygen, attaches itself to the haemoglobin and starves the body of oxygen. The smaller the person, the more quickly the body can be overcome by the effects of CO.

The symptoms of CO poisoning can easily be confused with flu.

Severe headaches, nausea, dizziness, general lethargy... And to confuse matters further, severe CO poisoning makes the body turn a cherry-red colour so, in spite of asphyxiation, cyanosis (turning blue) does not occur. A victim's skin will be pink or pale with bright red lips.

The early symptoms of CO poisoning are tiredness, drowsiness, headache and pains in the chest or stomach. Any of these symptoms require medical attention, with serious cases of CO poisoning needing urgent treatment.

CO poisoning can affect the victim's mental ability before they are even aware that there is a problem. Any exertion increasing the victim's oxygen demand only exacerbates the problem, rapidly leading to collapse and eventually death.

It is vital that the victim is removed immediately from the contaminated area, placed into the open air, and given pure oxygen if available. Victims should be kept at rest, avoiding exertion. Medical advice should be sought as soon as possible.

If anyone you know has any of the symptoms mentioned above when using a gas appliance, stop using the appliance until it has been checked by a CORGI Registered Installer. Consult a doctor and mention the possibility of CO poisoning.