

Cy-Fair Fire Department Shares Seven Things to Know About Carbon Monoxide Safety Before Traveling Over Spring Break.

Cy-Fair Fire Department explains why carbon monoxide poisoning is a danger all travelers should be aware of.

HOUSTON, TX, UNITED STATES, March 10, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- When traveling over spring break, most people try to plan for the unexpected, whether that's flight delays, sunburn, rainy days, or hungry kids. But according to Cy-Fair Fire Department's Daniel Anderson, there's one possibility often not considered: carbon monoxide poisoning.

According to the CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/carbon-monoxide/about/>), over 400 people die every year in the United States from unintentional carbon monoxide (or CO) poisoning. And while it's often associated with winter heating, carbon monoxide poisoning is actually a threat year-round—especially in enclosed or poorly ventilated spaces.

"Spring break travelers need to be aware that unlike smoke alarms, CO detectors are not legally required in every location," says Anderson, Cy-Fair's district chief of suppression training. "Therefore, not all hotels, vacation rentals, and Airbnbs have them."

Since 1999, well over 3,000 carbon monoxide poisoning incidents have occurred at U.S. hotels and motels (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2211335521002217>). For instance, in May 2024, over 60 guests at a West Virginia Microtel Inn & Suites were transported to the hospital after suffering suspected CO poisoning (<https://www.newsweek.com/dozens-hotel-guests-possibly-poisoned-carbon-monoxide-1904862>). Some were in critical condition. Vacation rentals aren't immune from this danger, either. A 2023 investigation by NBC News identified 19 deaths since 2013 that were alleged to have involved carbon monoxide poisoning at Airbnb properties worldwide (<https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/airbnb-carbon-monoxide-poisonings-detectors-rcna105634>).

"We don't share this information to frighten you or keep you from traveling," says Anderson. "We do want members of the public to be informed and prepared before they go on vacation. The good news is, protecting yourself and your family from CO poisoning over spring break—or any other time of the year—is fairly straightforward."

Here, Anderson shares seven things to know about carbon monoxide poisoning—and how to

guard against it when traveling.

First, get familiar with basic CO facts. Carbon monoxide (CO) is an invisible, odorless, and tasteless gas that can be deadly. It is produced when fuel-burning appliances (such as gas stoves, heaters, fireplaces, and generators) burn incompletely. Older, improperly maintained, and improperly vented appliances in hotels and rentals can produce dangerous CO levels.

“Early symptoms of CO poisoning—headache, dizziness, nausea, and confusion—are often mistaken for the flu or food poisoning,” says Anderson. “Prolonged exposure can cause unconsciousness and death.”

Check to see if the accommodation has CO detectors ahead of time. Ask the host or hotel staff if CO detectors are installed and where they are located.

Pack one or more portable CO detectors...Travel-sized, battery-operated models are available and can be placed in the hotel room or rental. When selecting a detector, choose one that has the label of a recognized testing laboratory such as Underwriters Laboratory (UL) or Intertek (ETL). Look for these symbols on packaging:

...And place them near the sleeping area. The Cy-Fair Fire Department advises the public to have a CO detector near each bedroom and on every level of a property. Especially if travelers will be spending spring break in a vacation rental, they should consider packing several detectors. This is a good idea even if the hotel or host claims CO detectors are installed.

“Place the detectors near where you are sleeping, like on a nightstand,” instructs Anderson. “Also, be aware that drafts and humidity can affect the detector’s ability to get an accurate reading, so try to keep them away from vents, open windows, or bathrooms.”

Be especially vigilant if traveling internationally. Many countries do not add mercaptan (the “rotten egg” smell) to natural gas or propane. This means that if there’s a leak, travelers won’t be able to smell it. This is likely what happened to a couple who died at a hotel in Mexico in 2023. According to family members, they felt sick but chalked their symptoms up to food poisoning.

When possible, avoid common CO culprits. Avoid using gas-powered generators, stoves, or grills inside enclosed areas (this includes tents as well!). When staying somewhere with fireplaces or gas appliances, make sure there is adequate ventilation.

Err on the side of safety if symptoms are experienced. If anyone traveling experiences unexplained headaches, dizziness, or nausea, everyone should leave the area immediately. Seek fresh air and medical advice.

“Carbon monoxide is a silent killer, and when traveling—especially internationally—the risks can be even greater,” Anderson concludes. “A simple, portable CO detector can save lives. Whether at

home or on the road, the best protection is preparation.”

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About CFFD:

The Cy-Fair Fire Department (CFFD) provides professional fire and emergency medical services to the citizens of Northwest Harris County, Texas. From its beginnings in the late 1950s, the Cy-Fair FD is now one of the largest, busiest combination fire departments in the United States, with over 38,000 emergency responses each year. CFFD covers the 164-square-mile area of Harris County Emergency Services District #9 (HCESD9) in the unincorporated part of Northwest Harris County. Responding from 13 stations strategically located throughout the territory, the 550-plus men and women of the fire department are among the best trained and equipped firefighters, emergency medical technicians (EMTs), and dispatchers in the nation.

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