

DANGER!

CARBON MONOXIDE (CO) POISONING



CAN'T BE SEEN



CAN'T BE SMELLED



CAN'T BE HEARD



CAN BE STOPPED

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless gas that kills without warning. It claims the lives of hundreds of people every year and makes thousands more ill. Many household items including gas- and oil-burning furnaces, portable generators, and charcoal grills produce this poison gas. Following these important steps can keep your family safe.

CO DETECTORS

- Install battery-operated CO detectors near every sleeping area in your home.
- Check CO detectors regularly to be sure they are functioning properly.

OIL & GAS FURNACES

- Have your furnace inspected every year.

PORTABLE GENERATORS

- Never use a generator inside your home or garage, even if doors and windows are open.
- Only use generators outside, more than 20 feet away from your home, doors, and windows.



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
AGENCY OF AGRICULTURE

PROTECT YOUR FAMILY

Vermont Department of Health

P.O. Box 70 • 108 Cherry Street • Burlington, VT 05402

Health Officer Hotline:

1-800-439-8550

Town Health Officer News

Environmental Health News

Winter 2015

Talking Trash

It's time to start rethinking trash. In 2012 the Vermont Legislature unanimously passed the Universal Recycling law (Act 148), which bans disposal of:

- **Recyclables** (metal, glass, plastics #1 & #2, and paper/cardboard)—effective 7/1/15;
- **Yard and clean wood debris**—effective 7/1/16; and
- **Food scraps**—effective 7/1/14-7/1/17 for larger food waste producers with full ban in 2020.

Act 148 also requires solid waste haulers and facilities to collect these same materials.

Why is the law needed?

Waste diversion rates have stagnated in Vermont between 30 to 36 percent over the past 10 years. Nearly 50 percent of the waste stream is composed of recyclable items, leaf and yard debris, and food scraps that could be diverted from landfills and put to better use. In addition, landfilling these materials (especially food scraps) contributes to climate change by producing greenhouse gas emission. Recyclable materials, food scraps, and leaf and yard debris are all valuable resources that should not be thrown away. Finally, landfill space in Vermont is limited and one of the two major landfills is nearing its capacity.



How will the law be implemented?

The law has a phased in timeline to allow infrastructure to develop (such as more haulers offering these services and increased capacity at facilities to manage recyclables and food scraps). Many residents and businesses already have convenient recycling services, but for those who do not, trash haulers and transfer stations will be required this summer (July 1, 2015) to collect recyclables. By 2017, both trash haulers and transfer stations will be required to offer collection of food scraps or subcontract with another hauler for these services. In addition, composting at home is an effective and affordable option that many Vermonters already use.

How does this affect Town Health Officers?

This new law will likely present some unique challenges for Town Health Officers. The Department of Health is currently beginning the process of updating the Rental Housing Health Code to mirror Act 148's definitions regarding differ-



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ent waste materials. Property owners will still be responsible for supplying secure containers for trash, food scraps, and recyclables and for ensuring that arrangements are made to regularly remove waste from the rental property. We also expect that there may be public health concerns with an increase in home composting and the Department of Health is working with the Department of Environmental Conservation to provide training materials for Town Health Officers by next summer.

More information can be found here:

www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/wastediv/solid/Act148.htm

Outdoor Wood Boilers

Every year, as temperatures start to drop, many towns receive complaints about outdoor wood boilers. OWBs are residential or small commercial wood-fired water heaters that are located outdoors or are separated from the space being heated. The fires in the large fire boxes heat water that is circulated into the home through underground pipes. The older styles of OWBs emit dense smoke, which can impact neighbors and affect public health – particularly for children, older adults, and people who have diabetes, heart disease, asthma or any other lung disease. According to the American Lung Association, the fine particulate found in wood smoke can be linked to higher school absenteeism, emergency room visits, and hospitalizations for cardiopulmonary conditions, respiratory infections, and asthma.

Newer OWBs should meet state standards for particulate emissions after certification tests are conducted in EPA approved laboratories. The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation through their Air Quality & Climate Division offers a voluntary change-out program that provides financial incentives to swap out an old OWB system for a cleaner, more efficient heating system.

As a Town Health Officer, you can be a valuable partner with the AQCD in compliance cases and in promoting their voluntary change-out program. Any questions or complaints should be sent directly to the section chief, John Wakefield, at john.wakefield@state.vt.us or by calling AQCD at **802-828-1288**.

More information on wood boilers and the change-out program can be found here:

www.anr.state.vt.us/air/htmOWBchangeoutprogram.htm

and at

www.vtwoodsmoke.org/

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January is National Radon Awareness Month

Start the New Year by recommending free radon test kits to residents in your town. Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that results from the breakdown of uranium in soil and bedrock. Radon is the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers in the United States. The EPA estimates that radon accounts for approximately 20,000 lung cancer deaths every year in the United States.

Radon is a significant public health issue and all houses should be tested for radon. Town Health Officers can help reduce lung cancer risk by encouraging Vermonters, both homeowners and renters, to take advantage of the Vermont Department of Health's free long-term radon test kit program. The Health Department's Radon Program distributes about 2,000 free long-term radon test kits every year and more than 18,000 houses have been tested. Because radon levels can change daily, weekly, and seasonally, a long-term test of 3-12 months (ideally including a heating season) best captures a resident's long-term exposure.

"Radon cannot be seen, smelled or tasted, so the only way to know if a house has elevated levels of radon is to test for it," said David Grass, a Health Department epidemiologist. "A radon problem cannot be predicted by the style, age, or location of a home. About 13 percent of houses tested in Vermont have elevated levels of radon."

Testing is easy. Just follow the instructions to place the test kit, and then mail it back to the Health Department to get your results when the testing period is over.

Get a free kit by e-mailing radon@state.vt.us, or call **1-800-439-8550**.

Exposure to high levels of radon is preventable and fixable through proper mitigation techniques. If test results show high levels of radon in the air, a mitigation system can be installed at a cost of approximately \$800-\$2,000.

For more information about radon, radon testing, and mitigation, visit the Health Department website at health-vermont.gov.

Health Officer Hotline:

1-800-439-8550

When Pests Move Inside

Many of the creatures we'd prefer to avoid, like rodents and insects, would love nothing more than to spend their winter inside a warm house. The Vermont Department of Health recommends that home and rental owners practice Integrated Pest Management to help deal with these unwelcome visitors. IPM is a different approach to traditional pest control and relies more on prevention and trapping. This can be challenging to implement, particularly in multifamily housing, but can greatly increase the health and safety of people by reducing contact with pests and with traditional poisons or other harmful chemicals.

The four basic components of IPM are:

1. Eliminate food sources for pests (including managing garbage outside the home).
2. Eliminate breeding and nesting places (cleaning up wood piles, debris, and clutter).
3. Eliminate access points into the home (seal up even small holes using chew proof materials).
4. Eliminate existing population (use traps to remove any pests already in the home).

As a Town Health Officer, you can be a great resource to property owners and tenants in your community. Use the principles of IPM when you do a rental inspection to better understand the extent of a pest infestation. For more information see: www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/eLearn/IPM.htm.

Need Help?

Did you know that the town health officers have an active email list serve? This list serve connects THOs from all over the state and allows the Health Department staff to answer any technical questions quickly. We strongly encourage all town health officers and deputy town health officers to join. It's not only a great resource for you to help each other, but it allows us to send out news, updates and training notices. To have your email added to the list, please contact Marielle Strong at marielle.strong@state.vt.us.

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Rental Housing Heat Reminder

The Vermont Rental Housing Health Code contains specific provisions for heating in rental properties.

All rental units and rooming houses must:

1. Have functioning heating facilities, in good repair, which vent to the outside.
2. Be able to provide heat when the outside temperature is less than 55° F.
3. Be able to maintain a room temperature of at least 65° F in all habitable rooms.

And if the owner of a rental unit is providing heat to the occupants as part of a rental agreement (as in a lease where heat is included in the rent) he or she must provide heat to all habitable rooms when the temperature is below 55° F.

Health Department Local Offices

Barre 479-4200	Middlebury 388-4644	St. Albans 524-7970
Bennington 447-3531	Morrisville 888-7447	St. Johnsbury 748-5151
Brattleboro 257-2880	Newport 334-6707	Springfield 885-5778
Burlington 863-7323	Rutland 786-5811	White River Jct. 295-8820

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Most of our district offices have Facebook pages with local information. Find your local office at healthvermont.gov/interactive_media.aspx.

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