

Recommendations by HSC/E made in 2000

Simple solutions to reducing unintentional deaths and injuries from carbon monoxide poisoning from faulty cooking and heating appliances powered by all or any carbon based fuels.

Less than 2% of CO in the air can kill in between one and three minutes see

http://www.hse.gov.uk/foi/internalops/hid_circs/technical_osd/spc_tech_osd_30/spctecsd30.pdf

see Para 74 table 23 page 26

We found the most vital ideas within a few weeks of talking to victims after we started in 1995 and after much lobbying by us the Health and Safety Commission/Executive made two excellent recommendations in 2000. These were:-

- 1. Levy on the gas suppliers to pay for raising awareness of the dangers and for research (we would prefer the levy on the whole fuel industry) and**
- 2. That the gas emergency service carry and use equipment to test gas appliances for emissions of carbon monoxide (CO)*.**

Please note that these recommendations were made after an exhaustive gas safety review and with the support of the majority of the stakeholders, who were mainly industry.

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath (CO-Gas Safety's patron) has described the gas emergency service having & using equipment to test gas appliances for CO as a 'no brainer'.

Sadly, neither recommendation has been implemented.

*Interestingly the second recommendation was, we think, shown to be vital during the Covid-19 pandemic. Please see <https://www.eveningtelegraph.co.uk/fp/mum-recovering-from-pneumonia-claimed-angus-council-initially-refused-to-fix-gas-because-they-believed-she-had-coronavirus/>

We had a meeting with HSE in April 2019 and we raised these recommendations because they are still needed. We received an entirely negative response. This needs political will.

CO victims need to know about CO and how to prevent it killing or injuring themselves and their loved ones see <http://www.co-gassafety.co.uk/about-co/prevention/>

But the gas emergency service does not carry or use equipment to test gas appliances for CO.

The First Call Operators do have Personal Alarm Monitors for CO to protect them but consumers calling 0800 111999 are told to turn off appliances/gas and open windows so by the time the FCO arrives any CO will usually have dissipated.

A survivor may be able to get a blood or breath test for CO but usually by the time this is done the CO will have left the blood giving a possibly dangerous false negative.

A massive PR campaign including prime time TV warnings could raise awareness of the dangers of CO very easily. For example, the Government adverts advising people to obtain 'flu jabs.

What people need is to know is are they safe from CO or have they been poisoned by CO? If they have been poisoned by CO, they need to know by how many parts per million in writing so they can take this to their GP and receive correct treatment.

At the moment, the gas emergency service simply cuts off the gas and may check next door. The problem is that a vulnerable victim, possibly brain damaged is left to deal with the appliance. The consumer may be able to get the appliance serviced or repaired but they almost certainly won't be able to find anyone qualified to test the appliance and provide evidence of poisoning by CO and if so, parts per million of CO they were exposed to. This means that often medical treatment will be incorrect.

Also, the victim will lack crucial evidence so won't be able to sue for damages against, say a landlord. This means that the burden of injury or death falls on the taxpayer not on the wrongdoer. This perpetuates the problem.

Please note that the known deaths and injuries from CO cost the UK taxpayer £178 million a year <https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmcomloc/50/50iii132.htm> and we are sure there are many unknown deaths and injuries. For example, there is no automatic test for CO on death.

Please also read <https://www.co-gassafety.co.uk/about-co/numbers-affected-by-co/>
Extrapolating from the small studies shows that 3 to 12 million people in the UK alone could be being exposed to 50 parts per million of CO and above. A study into 75,000 homes was funded in 2015 yet apparently due to cuts to the Fire & Rescue Service has not been finished. CO-Gas Safety only learned of this in early May 2020 after asking many questions about this study.