

# NEWS from CPSC

## U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission

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**Corrective Action Program Number: (800) 758-3688**

CPSC Consumer Hotline: (800) 638-2772

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## CPSC Urges Seasonal Furnace Inspection, Replacement of Recalled Vent Pipes to Prevent CO Poisonings

WASHINGTON, D.C. - As the home heating season approaches, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) urges consumers to have a professional inspection of all fuel-burning appliances -- including furnaces, stoves, fireplaces, clothes dryers and space heaters -- to detect deadly carbon monoxide (CO) leaks.

These appliances burn fuels -- typically gas, both natural and liquefied petroleum; kerosene; oil; coal; and wood. Under certain conditions, these appliances can produce deadly CO, but with proper installation and maintenance, are safe to use.

CO is a colorless, odorless gas produced by burning any fuel. The initial symptoms of CO poisoning are similar to flu, and include headache, fatigue, shortness of breath, nausea and dizziness. Exposure to high levels of CO can cause death.

"CO poisoning associated with using fuel-burning appliances kills more than 200 people each year and sends more than 10,000 to hospital emergency rooms for treatment," said CPSC Chairman Ann Brown.

CPSC recommends that the yearly, professional inspection include checking chimneys, flues and vents for leakage and blockage by creosote and debris. Leakage through cracks or holes could cause black stains on the outside of the chimney or flue. These stains can mean that pollutants are leaking into the house. Also, have all vents to furnaces, water heaters, boilers and other fuel-burning appliances checked to make sure they are not loose or disconnected.

Make sure your appliances are inspected for adequate ventilation. A supply of fresh air is important to help carry pollutants up the chimney, stovepipe or flue, and is necessary for the complete combustion of any fuel. Never block ventilation air openings.

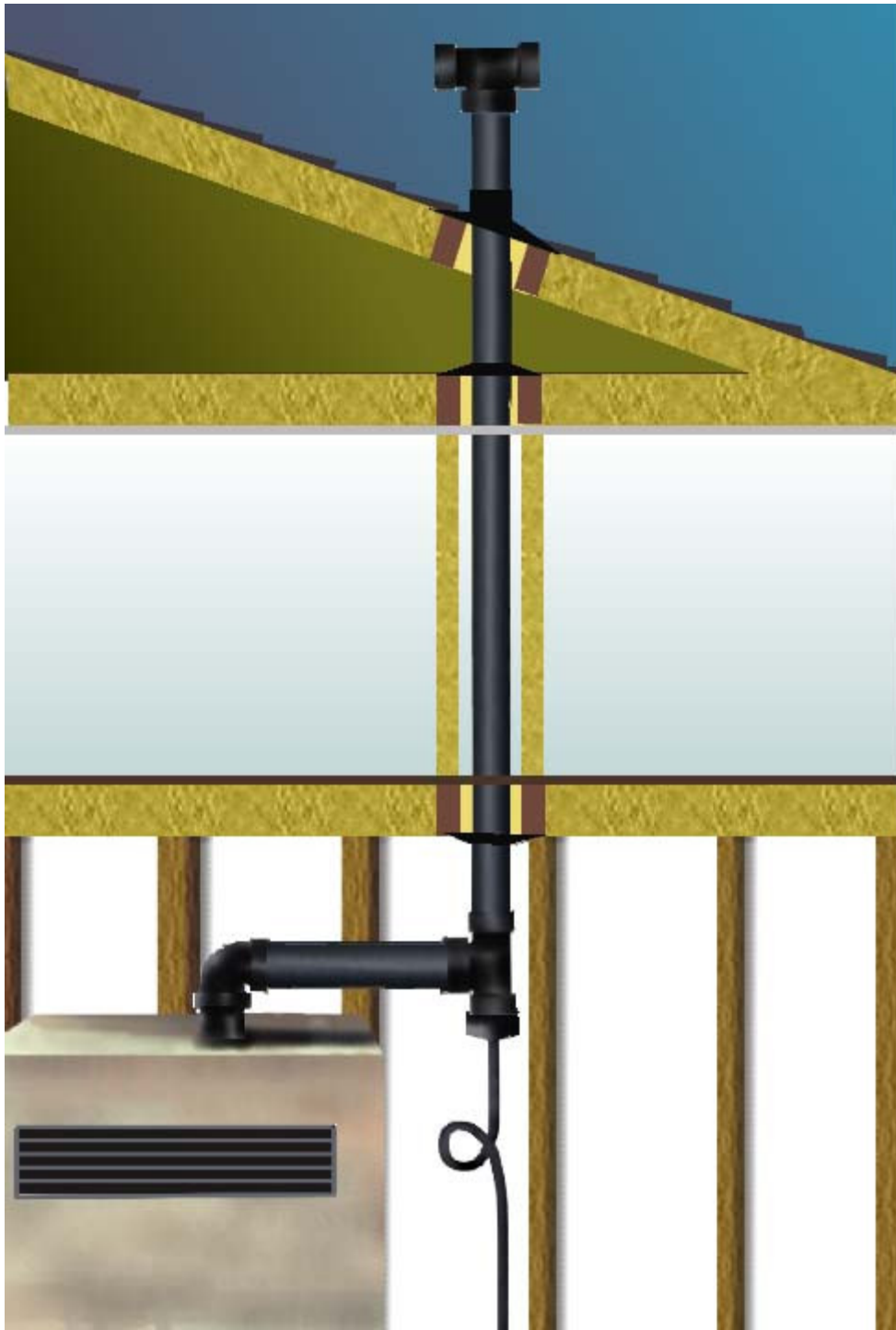
CPSC recommends that every home should have at least one CO alarm that meets the requirements of the most recent Underwriters Laboratories (UL) 2034 standard or International Approval Services 6-96 standard. CPSC recently completed work with UL to improve the CO alarm standard to improve the reliability of alarms, and reduce the potential for nuisance alarming.

### Recall Program to Replace Vent Pipes

Consumers should also have the vent pipes on their heating systems inspected. In 1998, virtually the entire furnace and boiler industry together with the manufacturers of high-temperature plastic vent (HTPV) pipes joined with CPSC to announce a vent pipe corrective action program. The program's purpose is to replace, free of charge, an estimated 250,000 HTPV pipe systems attached to gas or propane furnaces or boilers in consumers' homes. The HTPV pipes could crack or separate at the joints and leak CO.

Consumers can check the vent pipes attached to their natural gas or propane furnaces or boilers to determine if they are part of this recall. They can be identified as follows: the vent pipes are plastic; the vent pipes are colored gray or black; and the vent pipes have the names "Plexvent®," "Plexvent®II" or "Ultravent®" stamped on the vent pipe or printed on stickers placed on pieces used to connect the vent pipes together. Consumers should also check the location of these vent pipes. For furnaces, only HTPV systems that have vent pipes that go through the sidewalls of structures (horizontal systems) are subject to this program. For boilers, all HTPV systems are subject to this program. Other plastic vent pipes, such as white PVC or CPVC, are not involved in this program.

After checking the vent pipes, consumers should call the Corrective Action Program toll-free at (800) 758-3688, between 7 a.m. and 11 p.m. ET, seven days a week, to verify that their appliance venting systems are subject to this program. Consumers with eligible systems will receive new, professionally installed venting systems free of charge. Additionally, consumers who already have replaced their HTPV pipe systems may be eligible for reimbursement for some or all of the replacement costs.





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To report a dangerous product or a product-related injury, call CPSC's hotline at (800) 638-2772 or CPSC's teletypewriter at (800) 638-8270, or visit CPSC's web site at [www.cpsc.gov/talk.html](http://www.cpsc.gov/talk.html). To join a CPSC email subscription list, please go to [www.cpsc.gov/cpsclist.asp](http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsclist.asp). Consumers can obtain this release and recall information at CPSC's Web site at [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov).