



THE SILENT KILLER

The Heating Helpline issues some sound advice to keep homeowners safe throughout the winter

15 December 2009 - Around 50 people in the UK die every year, with hundreds more made seriously ill, due to carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning from poorly installed, badly maintained or defective gas appliances. Hardly a week goes by without another report of a home owner or tenant in rented accommodation killed or made seriously ill by fumes from an old or poorly maintained gas boiler. It's not just lives at stake – older boilers with their poor efficiency and high carbon emissions also harm the environment.

Carbon monoxide is a silent killer and failure to properly maintain gas appliances puts lives at risk, so it is essential that gas appliances are maintained

in good condition and subjected to annual maintenance and safety checks by a qualified Gas Safe registered engineer.

Research indicates that nearly a quarter of UK homes have one or more defective gas appliances and almost 1 in 10 are judged to be at risk of producing dangerous levels of carbon monoxide. But how do you know if you are vulnerable to this silent killer? The Heating Helpline (www.heatinghelpline.org.uk), backed by the Heating Ventilating Contractors Association (HVCA), provides essential safety information and useful advice to keep your home and family out of harms way.

You cannot see or smell carbon monoxide but there are vital signs to look out for such as sooting and staining on or around your gas boiler or appliance; excessive condensation in the room where an appliance is installed; another key indicator is lazy, yellow-orange gas flames instead of blue.

Fitting a European Standard certified audible carbon monoxide alarm is a vital second line of defence after having your appliances safety checked. It is essential that your alarm is marked with the EN50291 safety standard and with the CE mark.

Robert Higgs, Chief Executive of the Heating and Ventilating Contractors' Association, comments, "Too many home owners rely on old or inefficient boilers and gas appliances that may never have been serviced.

"We believe there are around four million old, inefficient boilers still operating in UK homes; not only do these represent a potential health hazard they are also damaging the environment.

“We also estimate that 3.5 million tonnes of carbon could be saved annually if all cast iron, permanent pilot boilers of 15-years-old and over were replaced by modern, high efficiency condensing models”.

For more information on how to spot the danger signs or for information on Gas Safe registered engineers, contact the free Heating Helpline on 0800 840 4069 or visit the website at: www.heatinghelpline.org.uk.

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Caption for picture: ***‘Old boiler in your house? Don’t put your family at risk – call in a Gas Safe Registered engineer to carry out essential safety checks and any essential maintenance needed’***

Note to Editors

Established in 1904, HVCA is the officially recognised organisation representing central heating contractors and exists to promote fair dealing and the sound installation of heating systems. Members who undertake gas installations are all Gas Safe registered. As a trade association HVCA has also taken the unusual but highly commendable step of requiring all its members to undergo third party inspection and assessment, which verifies technical competence, commercial capability and customer service.