



March 26, 2009

SAFE KIDS USA SUPPORTS
The Residential Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Prevention Act

Safe Kids USA strongly supports the *Residential Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Prevention Act*. As an organization dedicated to preventing unintentional injury to children, we applaud Representative Jim Matheson for his leadership on this critical safety initiative which could help prevent the potentially deadly effects of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning.

Safe Kids and its more than 600 coalitions and chapters have worked to educate parents across the country on the need for rapid detection of carbon monoxide – a colorless and odorless gas – and have distributed CO alarms to countless families in need. A CO alarm in the home can give occupants a sufficient warning when concentrations of carbon monoxide reach dangerous levels and it is estimated that properly functioning CO alarms may prevent up to half of the annual deaths that are attributed to CO poisoning. In fact, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) recommends that every home have at least one properly installed CO alarm in the area outside each individual bedroom. The CPSC believes that CO alarms are “as important to home safety as smoke [alarms].”

Though we know that CO alarms are effective when installed properly, we also know that many families do not have this vital piece of equipment in their homes. The *Residential Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Prevention Act* would establish an incentive grant program to encourage states to pass CO laws and would send the important public health message that CO alarms are needed in residences to reduce the risk of CO poisoning for the entire family.

The *Residential Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Prevention Act*, if passed, would also ensure the quality of CO alarms available for sale in the marketplace by requiring a mandatory safety standard for these devices. Currently, CO alarms are subject to a voluntary standard but Representative Matheson’s bill would give families peace of mind that the safety device they are purchasing would work as intended.



According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, from 1999-2004, 135 children ages 14 and under died from unintentional, non-fire related CO poisoning. However, because symptoms of CO poisoning are similar to the flu and other common ailments, it is possible that many deaths have not been classified as CO poisoning and as a result, the number of fatalities could be much higher than reported.

Young children are especially vulnerable to the effects of CO. They are more susceptible to carbon monoxide and may experience symptoms sooner than a healthy adult. Due to their smaller bodies, children process CO differently than adults and may be more severely affected by carbon monoxide in their blood. For those who survive a carbon monoxide poisoning, the long-term effects can be severe. Victims have reported memory loss, impaired motor skills and heart and lung problems. Often times, they deal with the CO injury for the rest of their lives.

We thank Representative Matheson for his work to further awareness about the dangers of carbon monoxide. We believe this legislation has the potential to save countless children from being accidentally poisoned by this silent killer.

For more information, contact Alan Korn or Tanya Chin Ross at 202/662-0600.

Safe Kids USA is a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations whose mission is to prevent accidental childhood injury – a leading killer of children 14 and under. Eighteen member countries bring together health and safety experts, educators, corporations, foundations, governments and volunteers to educate and protect families.