

# Gas in home can be killer

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Poisonous gases can spread through homes causing illness and death if household heating systems don't work properly. Chimneys of all types should be checked at least once a year for everything from deterioration of brick and mortar to blockage by such things as squirrels' nests, says Bill Drake, a fuel safety expert with the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations (MCCR).

Any obstruction could cause furnace fumes to back up into the house, which might produce a buildup of deadly carbon monoxide gas. Carbon monoxide is a colourless, odourless gas and its presence can go undetected until it's too late. It causes headaches, dizziness,

drowsiness, nausea and, in large amounts, death. Although furnace chimneys do not normally have to be swept as often as those serving fireplaces, they do need regular inspections and maintenance, Drake says.

A careful look at all chimney surfaces can reveal problems that might spark tragedy if not corrected. Chimneys serving natural gas furnaces are more susceptible than others to corrosion and blockage, as the cooler exhaust fumes are more likely to condense in the chimney. Warning signs that a chimney might have been damaged by these acidic deposits include debris inside the cleanout door at the base of the chimney, white powder or water stains on the outside near the roof, or dampness at the base.

If you spot these symptoms on your chimney, an inspection should be made immediately by a registered heating contractor. In some cases, a metal chimney liner may be required to prevent further damage. A 1982 study reports that one Ontario resident died and at least 38 others became ill from carbon monoxide poisoning because chimneys were not properly lined. But even heating systems with chimneys in good condition can be dangerous if the air supply in a home is inadequate for complete combustion and safe venting of exhaust.

While operating, a furnace continually uses air to burn fuel. In tightly sealed homes, other appliances, such as vent fans, clothes dryers and roaring fires

in fireplaces, can compete with the furnace for air. In extreme cases, air might be drawn back down the furnace chimney, along with dangerous exhaust

gases. A slightly open window will let in enough air to ease the problem until an expert can fix it. Home-owners should never tamper with furnaces. If chimney deterioration

or air flow problems are suspected, call a registered home heating contractor.

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# Canada Post mail volumes reaching record heights!

Canada's mail volumes reached a record high in the last nine months, Canada Post Corporation President R. Michael Warren said today in releasing the Corporation's seventh service performance report--the first produced in direct cooperation with its customers.

Total volumes climbed 7.4 percent since the beginning of the year to 5.4 billion pieces, the highest since the Post Office began keeping records in 1947.

In the nine-month period the Corporation went from testing its own mail delivery through the plants to measuring the customer mail for the first time.

The actual mail sent out and received by companies and individuals across the country was tested.

Nearly a quarter of a million letters including uncoded and non-standard items, were monitored. A total of 618 companies in 29 centres across Canada participated in the testing.

The result showed it took a national average of 1.5 days to deliver that mail locally and 2.5 days to out-of-town destinations.

This was relatively consistent with previous service performance

results even with the record increase in volumes. The Corporation will be able to make exact comparisons within the new system of testing next year.

"The indication is that we are giving better service with increased volumes since we became a Crown corporation", said Warren. The Corporation's internal testing showed performance in all three quarters continued to be about 10 percentage points better than the 1981 levels.

"The record volumes show acceptance in the market place and tell us we are making progress in giving the customer more value and service for the money". Noting the Corporation has broken its rates at least into the first quarter of

the new year, Warren said "Canada Post was able to provide that service without raising the rates because productivity improvements and cost cutting has helped us to keep pace with volumes".

The report also pointed out that the Corporation at the same time managed to improve such services as Priority Post Courier; work out a new operating agreement with the United States Postal Service to improve the flow of mail between the two countries, and be innovative with such customer-gearred new services as the Christmas Stick'n'Tick program, a way to save on Christmas card mailings that was extended to eight cities across the country.

## Free night

Winners of the draw held at the German-Canadian Club's annual bazaar held in St. Paul's United Church on Dec. 1 have been announced.

Winner of one night in the bridal suite in the

Highland Inn was Carol Philips. Winner of the second prize, a gingerbread house, was Mrs. F. Fernengel. Winner of the third prize, a Christmas wreath, was Irene Roth.

## Province willing to spend

More than \$3 million will be spent by the Ontario government over the next two years to help establish affirmative action programs in hospitals,

schools and municipalities.

The project is aid at the hiring and promotion as well as the training of women in the work place.

# YOUR CHIMNEY AND YOUR HEALTH

## "CARBON MONOXIDE - THE SILENT KILLER"

If your chimney is built of brick or stone you should give it a periodic "check-up". It's important to watch for signs of chimney deterioration. Blockage of the chimney can prevent furnace gases from exhausting safely to the outside of your home. A build-up of these gases, particularly carbon monoxide can be dangerous.

Carbon monoxide—a clear, odourless and toxic gas—may be produced if there is not enough air for complete combustion in furnaces and other fuel-burning appliances. The most common symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are frequent headaches, drowsiness and nausea.

There are many factors that may contribute to the danger of carbon monoxide spilling into the living space, including:

- Blocked or plugged chimneys. Furnace combustion, over a period of time, naturally deteriorates a chimney. So, chimney deterioration is not a new problem—but, it has become more apparent over the past few years. The addition of an energy conservation or fuel substitution device to your furnace or heating system may accelerate the problem by creating additional condensation in your chimney, leading to erosion and blockage. If the chimney shows evidence of erosion or blockage, a chimney liner may be required.
- Poorly maintained furnaces and fuel-burning appliances, including water heaters and space heaters. If out of adjustment or in need of cleaning, these appliances can produce carbon monoxide.
- Sealing, siding, insulation (particularly in basements), and new windows may reduce the flow of outside air into the home.
- Appliances that consume or exhaust air out of the home may starve the furnace. Clothes dryers, kitchen, bathroom and attic vent fans, central vacuum cleaners and kitchen barbecues which exhaust air out of the house also compete with the furnace. Woodstoves and fireplaces can consume five to ten times as much air as a furnace. In certain conditions, air may be drawn back down the furnace chimney along with dangerous exhaust fumes.

For these reasons, it's important to check the chimney periodically to make sure that it functions efficiently and without blockage.

### How to inspect your chimney:

1. Check the clean-out door at the bottom of the chimney. Remove any debris and be especially suspicious of any accumulation of mortar, brick or stone.
2. Check for blockage further up your chimney by holding a mirror through the clean-out door. You should have a clear, unobstructed view to the outside and see no evidence of crumbling walls. If your chimney is "offset" so that it can't be visually inspected with a mirror, you should call a qualified chimney specialist.
3. Look at the chimney from the outside of the house for signs of moisture, white powder or stains on the brick, stone or mortar. Also check the base-ment portion of the chimney for evidence of moisture build-up or seepage.

### What to do if you suspect trouble:

If you find blockage, turn off your heating system and water heater if it is also vented to the chimney. Call a qualified chimney specialist.

If there is white powder or moisture on the outside of the chimney, but no apparent blockage, you can operate your heating system for the time being, but you should have it properly inspected before deterioration occurs.

If you suspect that carbon monoxide may be created as a result of inadequate air supply in your home, open a window near the furnace or near the fireplace when it is operating, and call a registered heating contractor for further advice.

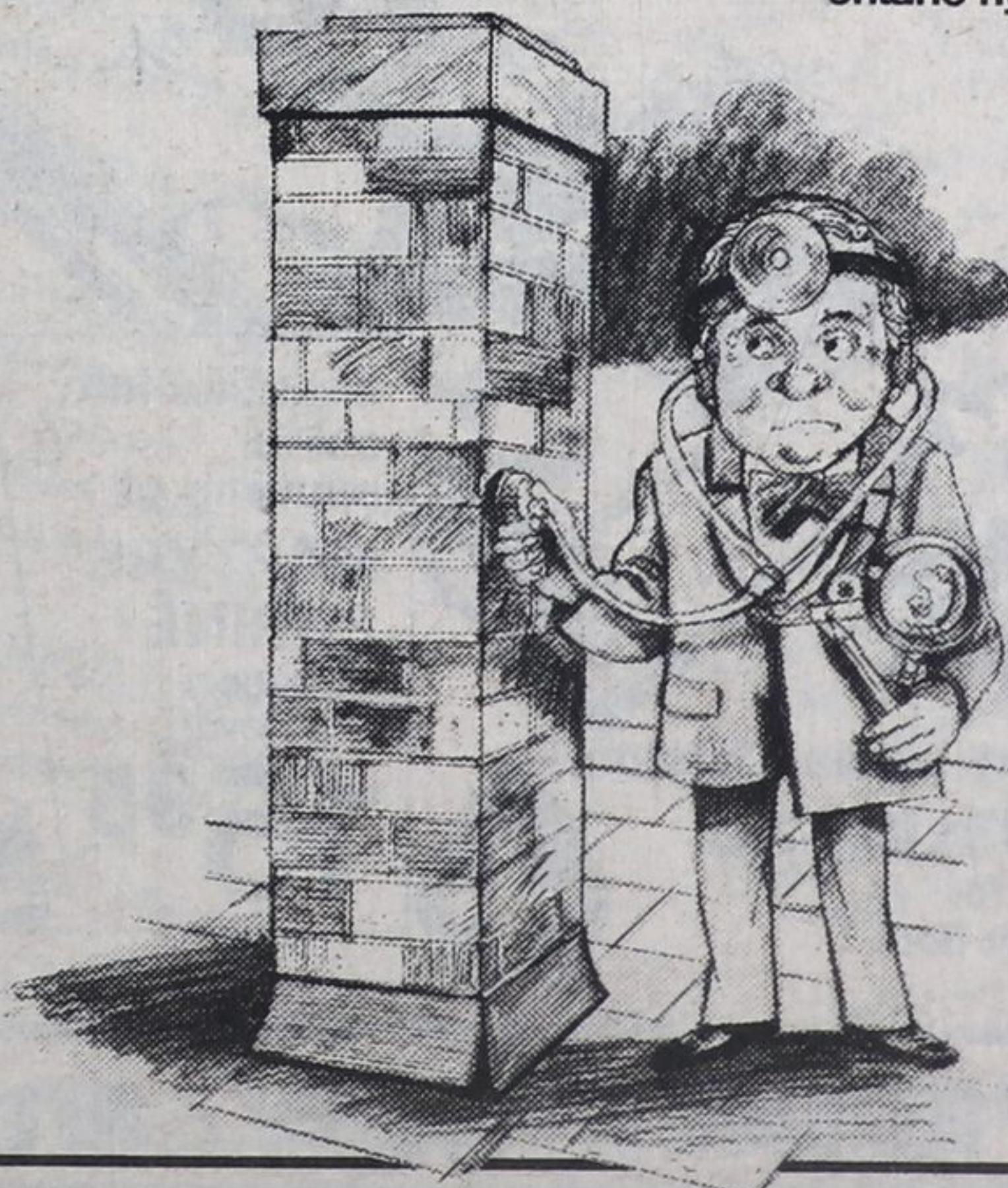
It is important—for the safety of your family—to make sure that your heating system, which includes the chimney, is in good operating condition...look after it.

If you rent your home, make sure you advise your landlord or rental agent if you suspect trouble.

Ontario Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations

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