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## STUDENTS WARNED ABOUT CARBON MONOXIDE DANGERS

As students return to university and many move into rented accommodation, a national lawyers group has issued a warning about the dangers of the silent killer – carbon monoxide.

Homeowners are responsible for keeping properties up to scratch and making sure they are safe for tenants, but not many students are aware of what is expected from their new landlords.

Denise Kitchener, chief executive of the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL), is urging students in rented housing to be vigilant.

“Many students won’t be aware that landlords have a legal duty to carry out an annual gas safety check,” she said. “It is imperative this is done, particularly as carbon monoxide (CO) is almost impossible to detect as it is colourless, odourless, tasteless and non-irritating.”

In a recent report,\* gas safety watchdog CORGI revealed that between April 2007 and March 2008 there were 52 cases of gas-related carbon monoxide poisoning, including 21 deaths and 125 injuries.

A spokesman from CORGI said: “Each year around 30 people die and many hundreds more suffer serious long-term health effects from carbon monoxide poisoning. Most of these incidents could be avoided by following some simple safety steps - this knowledge will save lives.

“Students need to be made more aware of how to identify the signs of carbon monoxide poisoning and how to recognise if an appliance might be releasing the lethal fumes, as well as looking out for all the things to check for before signing a contract.”

Denise Kitchener said carbon monoxide often goes unnoticed and many students

could mistake it for a hangover.

“Symptoms can include headaches, nausea, dizziness, sore throat and dry cough. Many doctors do not even pick up on it, mistaking it for a winter bug or even a hangover. Severe poisoning can result in a fast and irregular heart rate, hyperventilation, seizures and loss of consciousness.”

Students can take a few simple steps to ensure they protect themselves from the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning, such as:

- Ask the landlord for an up-to-date gas safety record.
- Where possible check the flame on gas appliances – the flame should be a stable blue one.
- Ask the landlord for an audible carbon monoxide alarm or install one yourself. You can buy a carbon monoxide alarm from a CORGI (Council for Registered Gas Installers) registered installer, from a store such as B&Q and from CORGI.

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Note to editors:

- For more information, contact Michael Johns, Assistant Press & PR Officer, t: 0115 9388702  
APIL (Association of Personal Injury Lawyers) is a not-for-profit organisation, whose members are dedicated to campaigning for improvements in the law to help people who are injured or become ill through no fault of their own
- \*Statistics taken from CORGI’s second Carbon Monoxide Report ([www.trustcorgi.com](http://www.trustcorgi.com)).Link: <http://www.trustcorgi.com/carbonmonoxidekills/Documents/COMap2008.pdf>
- Further information can also be found at the organisation’s website - [www.apil.org.uk](http://www.apil.org.uk)
- CORGI’s website has a specific page for university students [www.trustcorgi.com/university](http://www.trustcorgi.com/university) which includes a safety podcast and a downloadable checklist of things to look for when renting a property.