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## **BEWARE OF THE SILENT KILLER THIS WINTER, SAY LAWYERS**

In the run up to Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week, a national lawyers association has joined forces with gas safety watchdog, CORGI, to urge homeowners to ensure their gas appliances are safe.

Denise Kitchener, chief executive of the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL), said: "Latest figures from CORGI show there has been a 40 per cent increase in deaths caused by carbon monoxide poisoning in the past six months, predominantly from faulty gas appliances. It is absolutely essential that homeowners make sure gas fires are serviced regularly to avoid tragedies."

Rhiannon Rouse has experienced first hand the devastating effects caused by carbon monoxide poisoning. "It's impossible to realise that carbon monoxide is in your home, because you can't see, taste or smell it," she said.

"I began suffering from dizzy spells and uncontrollable sickness and, like many others, I passed it off as a winter virus until my five-year-old son began having violent coughing fits through the night, which gradually got worse.

“We later discovered that because the chimney breast went through his room, carbon monoxide was seeping in and slowly poisoning him on a daily basis. I was horrified.”

Solicitor Marcus Weatherby, an APIL member who supports the efforts of the carbon monoxide charities in the awareness week, said: “Public awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning is very low. It’s an issue which needs to be raised, as lack of awareness means families around the country are suffering unnecessarily.”

Marcus has worked on many cases involving carbon monoxide poisoning, including that of an 11 year-old girl whose death was caused by gas leaking from a defective boiler.

“Carbon monoxide poisoning can be missed by the medical profession and misdiagnosed as ‘flu or fatigue,’ he said. “Unfortunately, doctors often associate the symptoms with cold weather and overlook the problem.

“The main symptoms of poisoning are usually headaches, dizziness, muscle weakness, vomiting and vision problems,” he said. “It is vital that if you show any signs of poisoning, you should immediately seek medical attention.”

Dan Caesar, Head of Safety Promotions at CORGI, said: “It’s essential that people have their gas appliances regularly serviced by a CORGI registered installer.

“People who live in rented accommodation should be aware that their landlord has a legal duty to carry out an annual gas safety check. If you are unsure about the status of gas safety in your home, ask your landlord for the gas safety record – something that they are required by law to present,” advises Dan.

Dan says the following signs may mean carbon monoxide is present:

- The flame on a gas appliance is glowing yellow or orange – flames should generally be blue, unless it is a flame effect on a gas fire.
- Soot or brownish stains around the gas appliance.
- A pilot light frequently blowing out by itself.
- An increase in condensation on interior windows.

“Make sure you recognise the problem before it’s too late,” says Rhiannon.

“Don’t go through the same pain that my little boy and I did. You should invest in a carbon monoxide detector – not only will it give you peace of mind, it could save your life.”

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Notes to editors:

- APIL was set up in 1990 by a group of lawyers who wanted to provide a voice for injured people, and is now recognised by Government and other organisations. APIL's SafetyWatch campaign aims to highlight potential hazards to people in order to prevent injury. Visit [www.apil.com](http://www.apil.com)

- Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week (w/c 15 October) is run by CO Awareness, a not for profit organisation based in Runcorn, Cheshire. The organisation supports victims of Carbon Monoxide poisoning, their families and friends. For more information contact Lynn on: 07715899296, or email [LynnCoAwareness@aol.com](mailto:LynnCoAwareness@aol.com)

- Statistics relating to carbon monoxide poisoning were compiled by CORGI in its Carbon Monoxide report ([www.trustcorgi.com](http://www.trustcorgi.com))

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