

Tackling the silent killer

Carbon Monoxide is a silent killer and it has been making the headlines in the last couple of weeks as several new reports are published and a new All-Party Parliamentary Gas Safety Group was launched.

Sadly, Carbon Monoxide (CO) poisoning is an area that our incident investigators and expert witnesses have to be involved with on a regular basis. Also, when our team of auditors inspect properties, they can see first-hand the level of preparation and awareness of landlords and tenants and a high proportion are not adequately protected.

We have focused on CO issues and awareness in this issue of CORGI News. There is much that can be done to improve awareness – even the Christmas storyline on Coronation Street will include a CO poisoning – and any new measures that will help to raise awareness are to be welcomed.

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Service, service, service!!

A technical audit on a recently serviced condensing boiler for local authority identified a six year old boiler with excessive corrosion damage to the boiler. Following a post service technical investigation it was identified that the boiler condensate sump was completely blocked restricting the safe termination and discharge of condensate products.

This resulted in the condensate sump splitting and releasing condensate products within the appliance casing, discharging on to the appliance electrical controls and components. The appliance was deemed unsafe for use due to the potential release of products of combustion into the living environment.

From this it was identified that the appliance had not been serviced in accordance with manufacturer's instructions as the sump was not examined as part of the servicing requirements.

This could have resulted in a dangerous situation occurring, exposing occupants to the products of combustion. However, in this case it has resulted in an expensive repair for the landlord which could have been avoided if the appliance had been serviced in accordance with manufactures instructions.



New Level 2 VRQ in Gas Safety Awareness for front line social housing staff

A new Level 2 VRQ (Vocationally Related Qualification) has been launched by CORGI and EAL (Excellence Achievement Learning Ltd) specifically for front line social housing staff to help raise their awareness of gas safety issues.

At the request of several Housing Associations, who wanted a recognised qualification to demonstrate the commitment of their organisation to gas safety with relevant, quality training, the new course is a Level 2 VRQ in Gas Safety Awareness in Social Housing. Designed specifically for housing staff who are in the front line of gas safety every day, it would suit roles such as Housing Officers, Social Workers, Surveyors, Maintenance Operatives, Call Centre Staff, Gas Admin Staff and Voids Officers.

The qualification, training and associated study unit have been designed by CORGI and accredited by EAL.

The course consists of a half day training programme which is delivered by an experienced gas expert from CORGI's training team and covers these areas:-

- **Gas awareness** – an understanding of how gas behaves is it leaks and how it burns safely
- **Carbon Monoxide (CO) awareness** – an explanation of how CO is produced, what it does to the body and how to recognise the symptoms of CO poisoning
- **CO Detection** – understanding the safety measures that can reduce the risk of CO poisoning
- **Safe gas appliances** – identifying good combustion and unsafe appliances/installations
- **Landlord Responsibilities and Legislation** – an overview of the legal requirements placed on Social Landlords
- **Gas Safe Registration** – an understanding of the registration requirements and how to check operatives qualifications
- **Dealing with reports of fumes and gas escapes** – how to keep your customers/tenants safe in their homes

Claire Heyes, Joint CEO of CORGI Technical Services commented: "Our clients saw the success of the Level 4 VRQ for managers in social housing who are responsible for gas safety and requested a recognised qualification that a wide range of other front line staff could take to raise their awareness of gas safety issues. This Level 2 VRQ has been developed specifically to meet this need. We believe it will be suitable for a range of staff who might encounter issues relating to gas safety and will help to keep tenants safe and ensure the organisations meet their legal requirements."

Course dates for the Level 2 VRQ in Gas Safety Awareness in Social Housing are:-

- Scotland - 16 January 2013
- Manchester - 24 January 2013
- London - 31 January 2013
- North East - 7 February 2013
- Birmingham - 12 February 2013
- Bristol - 20 February 2013

In-house courses can also be run on request.

Details about how to book on the course can be found at:-

www.corgitechnical.com or by contacting **training@corgitechnical.com** or 01256 548040



Carbon Monoxide Poisoning - the silent killer

Every year around 4,000 people are diagnosed by A&E departments as having been poisoned by carbon monoxide according to the report called “Preventing Carbon Monoxide Poisoning” from the All Party Parliamentary Gas Safety Group (APPGSG) published in October this year. Claire Heyes and Bill Paton, Joint CEOs of CORGI attended the launch at the Houses of Parliament.

The threat of carbon monoxide (CO) exposure and the risks associated with that exposure are well documented – the Fire Brigade and Ambulance Services as well as the Health & Safety Executive, CORGI and the Health Protection Agency have dealt with CO incidents for years.

However, the major issues for all emergency responders remain the early identification of patients who have been exposed where the classic indicators are not present. Although the official figures of the number of people affected by CO poisoning might be around 4,000 a year, it is thought that the actual number is much higher because cases are under-reported.

CO is a silent killer and the threat comes in many guises that are relevant to both business and residential sections of our communities. There is also a terrible lack of awareness of the symptoms and great difficulty in diagnosing CO poisoning. CO cannot be seen, smelled or tasted and it is difficult to diagnose as the symptoms are very similar to other common illnesses such as flu and headaches.



The APPGSG report comments that many people may be living with low-level poisoning, not knowing it is happening and with their lives therefore constantly at risk. A Gas Safety Trust study identified eight deaths from CO poisoning last year.

Worryingly, the use of CO alarms remains limited when compared to the use of smoke alarms. This means the early warning systems are not in place and exposure to CO can be prolonged and in some cases fatal. The APPGSG report highlights the need for urgent measures to increase detection, raise awareness and improve regulation.

The majority of CO alarms have a limited life of only up to five years due to sensor ageing. Testing for reliability, as prescribed by the manufacturers’ instructions, is crucial, together with an awareness and understanding of best practice.

There is much that can be done to raise awareness. Fire Brigades across the UK have resources allocated to make home visits to educate residents and we at CORGI have worked with the Merseyside Fire Brigade to raise awareness of all matters CO, including the steps home occupiers can take to protect themselves in the fight against CO poisoning.

At CORGI we have been involved with many incident investigation and expert witness cases of CO poisoning and have seen the dangers at first hand. There is much that needs to be done to raise public awareness and equip the public so that we can reduce the number of incidents of CO poisoning and the new report from the APPGSG is a very welcome step in making a difference.

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- Manchester - 24 January 2013
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Funding crisis may force CO charity's closure

A charity dedicated to raising awareness of the killer gas carbon monoxide (CO) is at risk of closing down due to lack of funding. Carbon Monoxide Awareness will cease all activities at the end of December this year unless new funds are forthcoming.

The charity was established in April 2005 by Lynn Griffiths, a single mother from Runcorn, Cheshire, who, along with her late husband and four children, had suffered the devastating effects of undiagnosed CO poisoning in her home over many years. A partially-blocked flue had remained undetected despite the fact that Lynn had her gas appliances serviced regularly.

Lynn enlisted support from Tony Brunton, a gas registered engineer and expert witness and recruited volunteers to spread the awareness message. The charity has been run entirely by volunteers and all funding received has been used to "spread the message."

In the past seven years, the charity has:

- Established Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week, which this year begins on Monday 19 November
- Lobbied for resources to be provided for the education of doctors and nurses in the detection of carbon monoxide related illnesses
- Taken an annual roadshow to the Houses of Parliament and other strategic parts of the UK
- Launched its Carbon Monoxide Awareness Healthcare and Carbon Monoxide Community Groups (on different occasions) in the House of Lords.
- Developed a triage poster for hospital A & E departments with the HPA and other partners
- Worked with the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) on awareness-raising initiatives. See <http://www.cfoa.org.uk/12803>
- Launched its "Cozy but Deadly Barbeque Campaign" a joint project with Cornwall Fire and Rescue from the House of Commons.
- Launch a "FREE" Carbon Monoxide Phone App. See www.covictim.org
- Run press campaigns in partnership with the Health Protection Agency and others.



Lynn Griffiths said: "This is important work and I believe we have succeeded in getting our message across and in saving many people from suffering and the possibility of premature death. I'm devastated by the thought of giving it up, but unless we secure funding from somewhere, we will cease all activities after Christmas this year."

The future of Carbon Monoxide Awareness is at risk at a time when an estimated five million homes throughout the UK have gas appliances that are incorrectly installed, poorly maintained or damaged, putting home owners seriously at risk.

Official figures from the Department of Health show that every year in the UK 4,000 people are diagnosed with low-level poisoning, 200 are admitted to hospital and approximately 50 people die.

Lynn Griffiths said: "These figures are almost certainly an under estimation and the tragedy is that almost all CO deaths, illness and injuries could have been avoided. They are inevitably caused by faulty or badly installed appliances that burn gas, coal, wood or oil, or by blocked or partially-blocked flues and poor ventilation.

"I've dedicated the last seven years of my life to helping people avoid this unnecessary suffering. It's a cause I'm passionate about, but unless a fairy godmother should emerge out of the blue, I cannot see us continuing."

Continued...

Our 7th National Carbon monoxide awareness week aims to raise awareness of:

- The dangers of carbon monoxide, an odourless, colourless gas known as the silent killer
- The importance of making sure that all gas, oil, coal and wood burning appliances are serviced annually
- Ensuring that the chimney is swept
- Ensuring that Carbon Monoxide alarms are fitted and sited correctly and in-date and remembering that the sensor in a carbon monoxide alarm doesn't last forever.

Scheduled events for Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week this year are:

Monday, November 19,
House of Lords, London, "victims event" by invitation only

Tuesday, November 20,
Newtownabbey Borough Council,
Newtownabbey,
Northern Ireland

Wednesday, November 21,
Reid Kerr College, Paisley,
Scotland

Thursday, November 22,
Neath Port Talbot College,
South Wales

Friday, November 23,
Stobart Stadium, Widnes,
Cheshire

For further information contact
Lynn Griffith, President, Carbon
Monoxide Awareness,
on 07715-899296 or

Lynn@covictim.org or visit
www.covictim.org

Visit CORGI at HOMES 2012

14-15 November 2012

Excel Centre, London Docklands

CORGI Stand – E25

www.homesevent.co.uk

FLAG Seminar - On Wednesday 14 November at 4.15pm, Trevor Batt, Technical Expert at CORGI Technical Services will be talking about gas safety at the FLAG Seminar with other experts on fire, legionella and asbestos.

The CORGI presentation will examine the gas safety risks and measures that should be in place for landlords when building or taking receipt of new build properties, or refurbishing existing properties. The seminar is free to attend.

Feedback and thanks from successful VRQ candidate!

Steve Fisher, Gas Manager at Southway Housing Trust has just completed his Level 4 VRQ in Gas Safety management in Social Housing and has given this feedback: "I would like to say the experience throughout the assignments has been very valuable and rewarding. From our initial meeting in Leeds to the present you have been there every step of the way. I would (and will) recommend this course going forward to other like-minded people in our industry at every opportunity. Once again thank you very much, and also to CORGI for setting up this VRQ."

Gas Safety Management Conference 2013



Wednesday 24 April 2013. The Belfry, Birmingham

The Conference will be a full day event on Wednesday 24 April 2013 with a pre-Conference Dinner and industry Awards on Tuesday 23 April. Further information about the programme, speakers, ticket prices and how to book will be announced at HOMES 2012.

CO in the News

HouseMark have published their third Gas Safety benchmarking annual report covering a snapshot of performance on 31 March 2012.

[Read further](#)

Carbon Monoxide – Be Alarmed campaign publishes new report warning of the growing evidence that many people think they are protected when they are not.

[Read further](#)

Gas Safety Trust supports new CO alarm laws.

[Read further](#)

Corgi in the News

Launch of new VRQ qualification by CORGI - Installer Online 23/10/12

[Read further](#)

CORGI creates new safety qualification – HVP 23/10/12

[Read further](#)

New qualification launched to boost gas safety awareness – Heating & Ventilating 24/10/12

[Read further](#)

Carbon monoxide alarms are now mandatory!

[Heating, Ventilation & Plumbing 2/11/12 article >](#)

John Gregory, Technical Expert at CORGI Technical Services adds a comment to this article: "I think the article misses the point about CO production from gas cookers. Three out of the last four incident investigations I have carried out have confirmed the gas cooker as the source of CO production. In one case the gas boiler was disconnected and the gas supply left on for the occupier to use the cooking facility only to find the occupants in the house were still exposed to CO when using the cooker. More awareness needs to be raised of the dangers of CO poisoning from a faulty gas cooker."

Events

The dates for the next Regional Inter-Authority Gas Forum events are

Glasgow

Wed 27 Feb 2013

Wed 10 July 2013

Wed 20 Nov 2013

Midlands

Wed 13 Feb 2013

Wed 26 June 2013

Wed 13 Nov 2013

North East

Wed 6 Feb 2013

Tues 11 June 2013

Wed 30 Oct 2013

London

Wed 6 March 2013

Wed 3 July 2013

Wed 27 Nov 2013

Yorkshire

Wed 30 Jan 2013

Wed 12 June 2013

Wed 16 Oct 2013

South West

Wed 16 Jan 2013

Wed 15 May 2013

Wed 18 Sept 2013

Contact us at gasforum@corgitechnical.com if you would like to attend.

VRQ courses

Level 2 VRQ in Gas Safety Awareness in Social Housing

Course dates for the new Level 2 VRQ in Gas Safety Awareness in Social Housing are:-

- Scotland - 16 Jan 2013
- Manchester - 24 Jan 2013
- London - 31 Jan 2013
- North East - 7 Feb 2013
- Birmingham - 12 Feb 2013
- Bristol - 20 Feb 2013
- Glasgow - 15 May 2013
- Yorkshire - 13 June 2013
- North East - 19 Sept 2013
- North West - 17 Oct 2013

In-house courses can also be run on request.

Level 4 VRQ in Gas Safety Management for Social Housing course start dates:-

- Leicester - 14 Nov 2012
- Liverpool - 12 Dec 2012
- Bristol - 12 Feb 2013
- Manchester - 13 Feb 2013

- Edinburgh - 26 Feb 2013
- North East - 14 March 2013
- London - 17 April 2013
- Birmingham - 17 July 2013
- Portsmouth - 11 Sept 2013

Level 4 VRQ in Gas Safety Facilities Management course start dates:-

- South West - 21 Nov 2013
- Midlands - 5 Dec 2013
- Manchester - 18 April 2013
- Birmingham - 12 June 2013
- North West - 18 July 2013
- London - 16 Oct 2013

For more details about any course or to make a booking please contact training@orgitechnical.com

Your Feedback is needed!

We very much value your feedback on the VRQ courses, the Gas Forum events, the AGSM and any other aspects of the services we are providing. Please make comments using this email link tellus@orgitechnical.com and we will follow up.

CORGI Technical Services Ltd

CORGI Technical Services Ltd has over 30 years of technical expertise in all aspects of gas safety. With comprehensive site audits, training for employees, a new VRQ gas safety qualification, legal advice and expert witness testimony, CORGI works with local authorities, housing associations, private landlords, contractors, energy suppliers and the travel industry, to support them with their gas safety obligations, compliance and continued improvement.

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