

October 7, 2011

DIRECTIVE:	JOB CORPS INFORMATION NOTICE NO. 11- 22
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TO: ALL JOB CORPS NATIONAL OFFICE STAFF
ALL JOB CORPS REGIONAL STAFF
ALL JOB CORPS CENTER DIRECTORS
ALL JOB CORPS CENTER OPERATORS
ALL NATIONAL TRAINING AND SUPPORT CONTRACTORS
ALL OUTREACH, ADMISSIONS, AND CTS CONTRACTORS

FROM: EDNA PRIMROSE
National Director
Office of Job Corps

SUBJECT: Winter Weather Preparedness 2011- Preventing Carbon Monoxide Exposure

1. Purpose. To ensure Job Corps centers are adequately prepared for winter weather conditions by implementing preventive measures to reduce the risk of carbon monoxide exposure and following the recommended heating system maintenance and injury prevention guidance provided in Information Notice No. 09-26 entitled “ Preventing Cold Weather Injuries and Preparing Facilities for Winter Weather.”

2. Background. The Weather Channel’s predictions for October through December suggest that the northern and eastern United States will average cooler-than-normal temperatures with above-normal temperatures confined to the southwestern U.S. Several areas of the country have already experienced several inches of snow accumulation. It is important for Job Corps centers to begin preparing facilities, performing preventive maintenance, and taking precautions to reduce the risk of carbon monoxide exposure, and cold weather-related injuries.

Following incidents that occurred in 2004 and 2006, resulting in multiple student exposures to carbon monoxide, the National Office of Job Corps encouraged centers to install carbon monoxide detectors in dormitories, and increase efforts to ensure that gas-burning furnaces, water heaters, stoves, or other fuel-burning appliances are properly maintained. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) recommends placing carbon monoxide monitors on walls, ceilings or other location specified in the installation instructions accompanying the unit.

3. Preventing Carbon Monoxide (CO) Exposure. As cold weather approaches and use of fuel-burning appliances increases, the National Office of Job Corps recommends that centers take the following preventive measures:

- a. Be sure a qualified technician inspects fuel-burning appliances at least once each year. Fuel-burning appliances such as furnaces, hot water heaters, and stoves require yearly maintenance. Over time, components can become damaged or deteriorate. A qualified technician can identify and repair problems.
- b. Be alert to danger signs that signal a CO problem, such as:
 - (1) Streaks of carbon or soot around the service door of fuel-burning appliances;
 - (2) The absence of a draft in chimneys;
 - (3) Excessive rusting on appliance jackets or pipes that convey flame, smoke, or hot gases;
 - (4) Moisture collecting on the windows and walls of furnace rooms;
 - (5) Fallen soot from fireplaces;
 - (6) Small amounts of water leaking from the base of chimneys, vents, or pipes that convey flame, smoke, or hot gases; or
 - (7) Damaged or discolored bricks at the top of chimneys or rust on the portion of vent pipes visible from outside.
- c. Be aware that CO poisoning may cause flu-like symptoms such as headaches, tightness of chest, dizziness, fatigue, confusion, and breathing difficulties. CO poisoning often causes a victim's blood pressure to rise, and the victim's skin may take on a pink or red tone.
- d. The National Office of Job Corps recommends installing an Underwriters Laboratory (UL)-listed CO detector outside sleeping areas. A UL-listed CO detector will sound an alarm before dangerous levels of CO accumulate. CO indicator cards and other devices are also intended to detect elevated levels of CO, but most are not equipped with an audible alarm, and cannot wake you at night when most CO poisoning incidents occur.
- e. Know how to respond to a CO detector alarm. If the alarm sounds, immediately open windows and doors for ventilation. If anyone in the area is experiencing symptoms of CO poisoning (headache, dizziness, or other flu-like symptoms) immediately evacuate the area and notify the fire department. If no one is experiencing these symptoms, continue to ventilate, turn off fuel-burning appliances, and call a qualified technician to inspect the heating system and appliances as soon as possible. Because you have provided ventilation, the CO buildup may have dissipated by the time help responds, and the problem may appear to be solved. Do not, however, operate any fuel-burning appliances until you have clearly identified the source of the problem. A CO detector alarm indicates elevated levels of CO in the area. Never ignore the alarm!
- f. Read the manufacturer's instructions carefully before installing a CO detector. Do not place the detector within five feet of household chemicals. If your detector is wired directly into your center's electrical system, you should test it

monthly. If your unit is battery operated, test the detector weekly and replace the battery at least once a year.

- g. CO monitors should be placed no higher than four feet from the ground (normal breathing zones). This is to ensure potential detection of actionable levels of CO.
 - h. Avoid placing your CO detector on top of or across from fuel-burning appliances. These appliances will emit some CO when initially turned on.
 - i. Never use charcoal or gas grills inside a dorm, tent, camper, garage, or any other unventilated area.
 - j. Do not leave fuel-burning vehicles running in an enclosed garage.
4. Supplemental Heating Systems. When using supplemental heating systems, the National Office of Job Corps recommends that centers:
- a. Only use equipment with an Underwriters Laboratories, Inc. tag or label;
 - b. Use equipment with a thermostat control to conserve energy and prevent overheating;
 - c. Purchase heaters that are rated for a specific room size;
 - d. Purchase new heaters only (avoid second-hand units);
 - e. Purchase portable space heaters equipped with a tip-switch that will automatically shut off the unit if it is tipped over;
 - f. Remove unvented kerosene and natural gas units from service. Most states prohibit their use indoors;
 - g. Permanently locate vented units next to an outside wall, to allow for installation of a flue gas vent through a ceiling or directly through the wall to the outside;
 - h. Purchase vented sealed combustion or 100 percent outdoor air heaters because they are much safer to operate and are more efficient;
 - i. Have vented space heaters professionally inspected annually;
 - j. Use electric space heaters to heat a small area or dormitory room (they are not effective for heating large rooms or areas);
 - k. Locate the heater on a level surface away from foot traffic; and
 - l. Plug electric space heaters into an outlet or use a heavy-duty extension cord or 14- gauge wire or higher if an extension cord is necessary.
5. Action. In an ongoing effort to ensure the safety and well-being of students and staff during extreme weather conditions, Job Corps centers are encouraged to:

- Follow the preventive maintenance guidance and supplemental heating recommendations listed above;
- Test smoke detectors and carbon monoxide monitors monthly. Centers shall record the results of the monthly inspection on the smoke detector/fire drill log (Attachment A). Defective units shall be removed from service and promptly replaced;
- Review the injury prevention guidelines described in Job Corps Information Notice No. 09-26, “Preventing Cold Weather Injuries and Preparing Facilities for Winter Weather.” (Attachment B)

Addressees are to ensure this Information Notice is distributed to all appropriate staff.

6. Expiration Date. Until superseded.

7. Inquiries. Direct all inquiries to Alejandro “Alex” Perez at (202) 693-2825 or perez.alejandro@dol.gov, or Curtis Massey at (202) 693-3096 or massey.curtis@dol.gov.

Attachments

A – Smoke Detector, Carbon Monoxide Detector Testing and Fire Drill Checklist

B – Job Corps Information Notice No. 09-26, “Preventing Cold Weather Injuries and Preparing Facilities for Winter Weather”