

Report of the Year January 2025 to January 2026 - Our 31st year

Another very busy full year but with some progress at last.

We have also published a separate 'Month by Month' report providing more detail of the highlights on our website:

<https://www.co-gassafety.co.uk/information/report-2025-26-month-by-month>

For full details of our 'day to day' blog see:

<https://www.co-gassafety.co.uk/information/list-of-work-done/>

25th January 2025 was our 30th anniversary!

A bitter-sweet day – so much work done; so little achieved despite our constant hard work, in our opinion, due to lack of industry and government action.

Please see our 30-year report <https://www.co-gassafety.co.uk/information/30-year-anniversary-report/>

Hound Global was the PR agency we took on leading up to our 30th anniversary. They did a good job for the charity before, during and after the 25th January 2025 and in March reported that they had achieved 77 brand mentions, 122 pieces of coverage that had **reached an audience of 368.3 million**. Thank you Hound Global! If we had more funding, we would continue to work with this PR agency, but we have to run a tight ship.

We continue to see the need for a properly funded and set up body to do the work CO-Gas Safety does on a shoestring, almost entirely by volunteers.

General

We kept working at our original aims which were and are: -

1. Raising awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide (CO) and how to prevent exposure to CO and
2. That the gas emergency service should carry and use equipment to test for CO.
3. We now want all the Registered Gas Engineers to have a mandatory duty to test for CO, whenever practicable.

Sought support from the Institute of Gas Engineers and Managers (IGEM) to testing for CO whenever practicable, in principle, without much success. But a very recent email from Ian McCluskey, Head of Technical and Policy at IGEM is more positive and has allowed us to quote:

'In principle, IGEM supports a duty to test for CO to be on the gas emergency service. There are challenges of funding that need to be resolved; however, IGEM is happy to work with CO-Gas Safety, the GDNs, Ofgem and other bodies to resolve these issues.'

We have thanked Ian and sought his advice on how to take this forward.

CO (carbon monoxide) is a deadly gas that cannot be sensed using human senses yet less than 2% of CO in the air can kill in under three minutes. CO can be found using equipment such as a flue gas analyser. Surely a gas emergency service that has no duty to test for CO is not fit for purpose?

This year we have sent many letters to Ofgem (the regulator). We put to Ofgem that there needs to be a duty to test for carbon monoxide (CO) whenever practicable on the gas emergency service.

Thanks to funding from Ofgem, GDNs (Gas Distribution Networks) are now testing for CO but only small numbers and only vulnerable customers, usually those on or eligible for the Priority Services Register (the sick, poor, old, disabled, those with children under five and those living in remote rural areas). Yet anyone can be exposed to CO, however healthy, wealthy or wise.

Funds from Ofgem are public funds, so surely there should be publicly available report to Ofgem about the testing for CO undertaken and the results?

Issues of concern: -

1. How is the decision about whether or not to test for CO made?

FRS (Fire & Rescue Services) and the GDNs (the four* companies which collectively run the national gas emergency service) are the emergency services called.

**Cadent, NGN Northern Gas Networks, SGN, Scottish & Southern Gas Networks & W & W U, Wales & West Utilities.*

We are concerned that the GDNs are using visual signs etc. to decide whether or not to test for CO!

2. Why have we found that one GDN will only test if the landlord gives permission?

We think this applies to all four companies.

3. Surely, it's vital to test for CO to identify any appliance emitting CO?

4. When testing is undertaken, exactly what steps are taken before, during and after testing by the FRS and GDNs?

5. If CO is found, are the parts per million (PPM) of CO found given to those exposed or who might have been exposed in writing/digitally for their medics? This would save the patient distress at not being believed, having other irrelevant tests and NHS funds.

6. Has the tenant any right to be told of the levels of CO they have been exposed to? If not, surely there should be a duty to inform the tenant and anyone else exposed?

7. After CO found, is there any follow up to make sure the offending appliance is fixed?

8. If low CO or no CO is found but CO has been suspected, what happens next? Do the FRS and/or GDN just leave? We suggest that if there is any doubt, a CO alarm to EN 50291 is left at the premises (ideally with downloadable data such as AICO's audio link) and also a CO logger (such as the one by Lascar) and a further visit made to obtain results and data and retrieve equipment to be re-used for others.

9. What is low CO? What level is ignored? See * below.

10. Re CO alarms, people need to be told to get alarms out of the packet and pull the tab to connect the battery. Many do not do this. Also, CO alarms while good, (i.e. do save lives) have limitations (e.g. even those to EN 50291 are manufactured NOT to alarm until 30 parts per million of CO for two hours. Therefore, will not alarm at low levels that can still cause injury, see [*https://www.coresearchtrust.org/media-information/three-year-project-looking-at-risk-of-co-to-older-people-reveals-concerning-findings](https://www.coresearchtrust.org/media-information/three-year-project-looking-at-risk-of-co-to-older-people-reveals-concerning-findings)

11. For effective awareness and warnings, testing for CO, recording PPM of CO, providing this to those exposed/could have been exposed, details such as fuel/appliance type and learning from incidents are all vital for collecting data for research & therefore prevention of deaths and injuries.

Sadly, access to a Registered Gas Engineer who is qualified to test for CO is almost impossible, even if the person exposed knows what to ask for, e.g. British Gas does not offer this service. Most RGEs who have the qualification CMDDA1 to test for CO (about 2%) are employed by the GDNs. The Gas Safe Register has confirmed that it holds no list of RGEs who have CMDDA1. We have been raising these concerns for over 30 years!

A survivor we tried to help kindly asked Lib Dem MP Roz Savage, to write to HSE's Minister, Sir Stephen Timms MP, who kindly wrote stating that testing for CO is a safety issue. This mattered because we were told by Ofgem, Rebecca Pickett, now Head of the Future of Gas, on the telephone some years ago, that if HSE stated that testing for CO was a safety issue, Ofgem would have to find the funds to implement testing for CO. Ofgem is being helpful.

We had a meeting with Ofgem in November to talk about testing for CO. We had sent the letter from Sir Stephen Timms, Minister for the HSE before the meeting. This meeting was mainly to discuss that testing for CO needs to be funded and preferably be compulsory, e.g. term of the licences for the GDNs or legislation. We queried why less funds have been provided now than five years ago? Pointed out rules are needed from Ofgem on raising awareness, detailed rules on testing and data collection, the need for annual report to Ofgem and for a funded body to replace CO-Gas Safety.

As a result of this meeting, we now have GTINS data sent to us (from 08.12.25). This is notification of deaths and incidents for carbon monoxide, fire and explosions from the GDNs. This data is quite basic yet could be more detailed and therefore effective.

Ofgem has kindly told us that it is willing to work with us to improve this data. We have spent over 30 years now collecting, collating and publishing data of proved deaths from unintentional CO, so we have learned a great deal about the relevant fields.

We think that the duty to test for CO, whenever practicable, should also be placed on all Registered Gas Safe Engineers before and after a job was done. The first test would be relevant for the engineer's own safety as well as for occupiers to take to their medics.

The second test, after the work was finished, would provide an objective test to protect against a poor job just done, e.g. the death of Zoe Anderson aged 24 in 2010, when the RGE had not connected the flue to a new gas boiler. Please note that Zoe's father is Chris Anderson of TED talks and is a multi-millionaire and Zoe died in the family home in Bath. Please note that there is no specific requirement to test for CO on a landlord's gas safety check.

We continued to press for awareness of CO and prevention. There is need for good warning films. We came up with an idea for the GDNs, but they did not take this up. We asked if they could come up with something better and appoint someone to work with us on the detail, which they told us they required. So far, no action has been taken on this request.

Mari Herigstad gave an expert presentation at the symposium on her CO in pregnancy paper, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s12884-025-08126-6> Hilary Wareing, experienced & expert midwife and director of Improving Performance in Practice (iPiP) was the architect of most of the work on pregnancy in humans. Of 161 households monitored, 57.8% had detectable CO levels, (31.7% experienced levels above 4ppm and 14.3% above 10ppm). Our thanks to Mari for allowing us to quote.

Tom Hill aged 18 died of CO from a portable gas heater in Scotland in 2015. Tom's father Jerry organised very exciting successful events organised by Jerry Hill in May in England, Wales, Switzerland, Greenland and Tasmania – all events that were to honour Tom Hill, who tragically died of CO aged just 18, and to raise £4,500 for CO-Gas Safety.

For fantastic pictures and a film from Jerry about the climb, please see <https://www.co-gassafety.co.uk/tom-hill-memorial-mountain-climb-04-05-25/> Jerry had organised it all perfectly. What a brilliantly successful event! Wrote to thank him and all who took part.

Over the winter, there were meetings in the Houses of Parliament with Jerry and Alison Hill, Tom's parents and Dan Edwards, of SGN, chair of the GDN CO group. Jerry had kept saying that Tom and his friends had not known what to do after the CO alarm sounded before Tom died. Dan suggested a picture showing what to do when a CO alarm sounds (i.e. get outside) on sticker on notices in rented property and CO alarms. Dan kindly had a drawing on a sticker and magnet produced and has our congratulations, gratitude and support in trying to move this forward.

Issues raised: -

- (a) What to do when a CO alarm sounds.
- (b) The need to inform people to get outside and call 999. How the script read out by the gas emergency service needs changing when a CO alarm has sounded. HSE has kindly confirmed the script is 'not owned'.

- (c) How to persuade the CO alarm manufacturers to put this drawing on their alarms and use a QR code on alarms the packets with more details inside and perhaps change the standard EN 50291 to do this.
- (d) How all CO alarms to EN 50291 should sound the same. This is an issue for EN 50291, CoGDEM (the organisation of CO alarm manufacturers) and the CO alarm manufacturers.
- (e) How the existing Regulations on Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm Regulations do not specify that the CO alarm must be to EN 50291 or its most recent replacement. If there is an amendment to these Regulations, then maybe CO alarms with downloadable data and audio links could also be specified?

Further issue found later

- (f) 'Without permission from the property manager unfortunately we can not move forward with carrying out a CMDDA1 check'. This quote is from Cadent but we suspect all GDNs do the same.

The Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm Regulations 2015 (amended 2022) need amendment. If CO alarms are to be mandatory at all, why not require the CO alarm to be obtained from a reputable source, not the Internet? Why not mandate getting alarm out of the box and working? Why not mandate CO alarms for all homes and workplaces?

There are also illogical exclusions, namely rented homes in England where there are gas cookers only, yet cookers generally expel the products of combustion into a small kitchen. CLASP & EU research have recommended banning or phasing out. There are also exclusions in schools, hospitals, hospices and care homes. The one exclusion that seems logical, is long leases. <https://www.clasp.ngo/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Gas-Report.pdf> & <https://research.birmingham.ac.uk/en/clippings/gas-stoves-linked-to-40000-premature-deaths-in-europe-annually>

In May Stephanie was invited to speak at the House of Commons about CO and so was Jonathan Kane. Stephanie spoke about CO, how it could not be sensed using human senses and how CO could kill at less than 2% in the air in under three minutes. Also, that the gas emergency service had no duty to test for CO. Jonathan Kane spoke about solutions and how testing for CO was vital and could be done quickly, testing four rooms at a time. He also spoke about CO alarms which are good and relatively cheap but have disadvantages.

The inquest into Tom Hill's death was in June 2025. The 10-year delay was due to the death occurring in Scotland, which held a Fatal Accidents inquiry. The jurisdiction of the English Coroner only arose from the presence of the deceased, when brought back to England.

The CO alarm had sounded a day or so before Tom died. In other words, there was a warning from the CO alarm in the rented property in Scotland, but nobody knew what to

do or that the CO alarm sounding meant there was a real CO danger that should have alerted all occupiers to go outside immediately.

The Coroner, Mr Jason Pegg, kindly wrote a prevention of future deaths letter about making portable gas heaters safer but sadly not about what to do after a CO alarm sounds. This was because it was the portable gas heater emitted the CO that directly caused Tom's death. However, can any carbon fuelled appliances without a flue or other means to take the products of combustion to outside, ever be safe?

Congratulations to Cathy Foley, her MP Al Pinkerton & Kathy Atkinson of Safer Tourism Foundation, who have worked brilliantly to raise awareness of the need for CO alarms for gap year students. But CO alarms were only recommended by the Foreign Office for independent travellers. There is also a danger of portraying the UK as perfectly safe from CO. Cathy Foley also succeeded in persuading a major retailer to sell Safe-Lincs CO alarms in air & seaports, something which Consumer Safety International & CO-Gas Safety worked to do for decades.

We had a meeting with Cadent and SIA in July at which we discussed the need for detailed data and our 30 years of data of proved unintentional CO deaths and how we had experience of the needed fields. We also raised the need to set up a properly funded body to help victims, survivors and their families; we are run by volunteers.

In September Stephanie attended the Gas Safe Register event at the House of Commons. Stephanie talked to Paul Davies MP, Chair of APPCOG (The All Party Parliamentary Carbon Monoxide Group of MPs). Stephanie asked for his suggestion to us (at a meeting in February) to work with Gaelan Komen to draft some regulations, to be put in writing. We had proposed duties in the gas regulations to test for CO. We wished for this request to be in writing so we could engage some gas engineers to help us. Later we asked again by email.

At the CORT conference in October, Stephanie mentioned the small university studies* 2006 and 2011 which found around 20% of households had levels of CO of 50 PPM and above. Of course, this research was in the past; hopefully many improvements have been made. But to be sure, the only way is to test, say 2,000 randomly selected homes by installing Lascar data loggers and AICO alarms to EN 50291 with downloadable data and perhaps audio link too. *<https://www.co-gassafety.co.uk/about-co/numbers-affected-by-co/>

To take this research forward the following are needed: -

1. Statistician is needed to confirm that 2,000 homes are statistically significant. Adrian McConnell of CORT has kindly told us he can find one.
2. Funding is needed and CORT seemed receptive.
3. Trusted people to put the loggers and alarms in randomly selected homes. Fire & Rescue and First Call Operators from the GDNs considered. Other suggestions please.

What about health visitors? It's important that homes are not changed before the monitoring starts but the person who enters the home must be a trusted person.

4.University and researcher required.

In early January 2026, we wrote to the BBC Radio 4 Today Programme about their excellent project of following couples expecting their first baby. The programme will follow these couples for the first five years. We wrote about the need to raise awareness of the dangers of CO and copied Hilary Wareing, who kindly responded positively.

Responded in detail to a letter from Nathan Macwhinnie of Ofgem copying in David Paterson and Rebecca Pickett and ended, by asking under the FOI Act: -

1.Could, if Ofgem wished, require GDNs to test for CO whenever practicable as a condition of licence?

2.Is the GDN duty to report GTINS data a licence condition?

3.If yes, when was this condition imposed?

We have been invited to speak to the Cross-Departmental Committee on Gas Safety and Carbon Monoxide on 19th February 2026 but sadly this is only a virtual meeting which is not as helpful as a face-to-face meeting, which can also be recorded.

We continued to: -

(a) Seek support for mandatory testing for the deadly gas CO test* CO on the gas emergency service and all Registered Gas Safe Engineers from the fuel industry, IGEM, charities, Gas Safe Register, HSE, Ofgem and leadership from APPCOG.

**and give PPM of CO found to those exposed for medics plus recorded as data.*

Please note that in 2011-12 NGN found that it was possible to test for CO in homes and this only added 5-7 minutes onto the visit

<https://www.northerngasnetworks.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Giving-carbon-monoxide-nowhere-to-hide.pdf>

(b) Support victims, survivors and their families.

(c) Collect, compile and publish data of deaths of unintentional CO updated late January or early February see <https://www.co-gassafety.co.uk/data-menu/>
We now have 30 years of data!

(d) Continued to lobby for a new body to take over our work. We have come across around four cases where people are being poisoned from emissions from next door and these seem very difficult to solve, even when the survivors whom we are trying to help are offering to pay to move the boiler or flue etc. next door.

(e) Try to obtain the interest of Radio 4's Woman's Hour and all other media in CO.

(f) Contribute to APPCOG stakeholder meetings and events.

My thanks to all our wonderful directors/trustees who have helped me so well during this year and also to our survivors, victims and families.

Thank you to Jonathan Kane and Kane International for their endless help and support and for their funding.

Finally, thanks to those in industry who have put up with our lobbying efforts, especially those who understand that trying to effect change means that we just have to keep asking for what we think are basic requirements, because CO and products of combustion are a life and death issue and good health matters.

Stephanie Trotter, OBE,

President & Director CO-Gas Safety