

Public should take precautionary measures against carbon monoxide poisoning

Following a notification from Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital (PYNEH) on a case of carbon monoxide poisoning, the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health and the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) today (January 19) appealed to members of the public to take precautionary measures against carbon monoxide poisoning.

The case involved a 36-year-old woman, who was found unconscious when she had a shower inside the bathroom at home yesterday (January 18). She was sent to Caritas Medical Centre and was later transferred to PYNEH for treatment. She is now in stable condition.

The EMSD conducted site investigation immediately and confirmed that there was no town gas leakage at the scene. The subject gas water heater was installed in 1995. It is a model before the scheme for Approval of Domestic Gas Appliances took effect in 2003 and therefore did not bear a "GU" mark. Investigation revealed serious corrosion at the bottom of the gas water heater, causing the incident. The EMSD seized the subject gas water heater for further investigation.

The CHP said that carbon monoxide is a colourless, odourless and tasteless gas which is a by-product from incomplete combustion of any fuel which contains carbon, such as wood, natural gas and gasoline.

Exposure to a low concentration of carbon monoxide can lead to a range of symptoms such as dizziness, headache, tiredness and nausea; whereas exposure to a high concentration of carbon monoxide can lead to impaired vision, disturbed co-ordination, unconsciousness, brain damage or even death.

The CHP reminded members of the public that a gas water heater should be used in a well-ventilated area. They should seek medical attention immediately if suspected of developing symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning.

The EMSD also reminded members of the public the following:

1. Occupants should buy and use gas water heater which has been approved by the EMSD and bears a "GU" mark. If the gas water heater was installed before the scheme for Approval of Domestic Gas Appliances took effect in 2003, the occupant should maintain the gas water heater in good conditions and consider replacing the gas water heater with one bearing the "GU" mark;
2. Occupants should arrange regular safety inspection of gas water heater every 18 months by a registered gas contractor. If in doubt of the

condition of the gas water heater, please contact the registered gas supply company at any time; and

3. Occupants should stop using the gas water heater if there is any abnormality (e.g. corrosion or damage of casing) or sign of gas leakage observed. Please contact the registered gas supply company or dealer of the gas water heater to inspect or repair.