

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 1, 2021

Mr. Robert S. Adler
Acting Chairman
Consumer Product Safety Commission
4330 East West Highway
Bethesda, MD 20814

Dear Acting Chairman Adler:

We write to express our concerns regarding recent reports of increasing hospitalizations and deaths caused by carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning and to request that the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) take steps to ensure that Americans are kept safe from CO poisoning.

Recent reports highlight the ongoing dangers associated with CO poisonings, which often result from the improper use of home heating and power sources—ranging from charcoal grills and campfire stoves to portable generators and car engines.¹ The tragic incidents following the unprecedented winter storms in Texas—in which 700 people were hospitalized, and at least two people died—shed light on the life-threatening risks of CO poisoning. Sadly, this is not a recent problem.² The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that at least 430 people in the U.S. die each year from CO poisoning and approximately 50,000 people are forced to seek medical attention for accidental CO poisoning.³

For this reason, we introduced the bipartisan *Nicholas and Zachary Burt Memorial Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Prevention Act*, which encourages states to adopt tougher standards to help ensure carbon monoxide (CO) detectors are safe and reliable. While we appreciate the actions the CPSC has taken to educate consumers—such as posting safety tips to the Commission’s

¹ Read, Katy. (2021, Feb. 20). *Carbon monoxide poisonings in Houston hit Twin Cities radio personality close to home*. Star Tribune. Retrieved from <https://www.startribune.com/carbon-monoxide-poisonings-in-houston-hit-twin-cities-radio-personality-close-to-home/600025515/>; McDonnell Nieto del Rio, Giulia, Fausset, Richard, and Diaz, Johnny. (2021, Feb. 19). NY Times. *Extreme Cold Killed Texans in Their Bedrooms, Vehicles and Backyards*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/19/us/texas-deaths-winter-storm.html>; Fieldstadt, Elisha. (2021, Feb. 16). *Two dead from carbon monoxide poisoning after using car for heat in Texas storm*. NBC News. Retrieved from <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/weather/two-dead-carbon-monoxide-poisoning-after-using-car-heat-texas-n1257972>; Littlefield, Susan-Elizabeth. (2021, Feb. 8). *Carbon Monoxide Poisoning: The Silent Winter Danger*. CBS Minnesota. Retrieved from <https://minnesota.cbslocal.com/2021/02/08/998373/>

² Fieldstadt, Elisha. (2021, Feb. 16). *Two dead from carbon monoxide poisoning after using car for heat in Texas storm*. NBC News. Retrieved from <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/weather/two-dead-carbon-monoxide-poisoning-after-using-car-heat-texas-n1257972>; McDonnell Nieto del Rio, Giulia, Fausset, Richard, and Diaz, Johnny. (2021, Feb. 19). NY Times. *Extreme Cold Killed Texans in Their Bedrooms, Vehicles and Backyards*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/19/us/texas-deaths-winter-storm.html>

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Carbon Monoxide (CO) Poisoning Prevention*. (2021, Jan. 19). Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/features/copoisoning/index.html#:~:text=Every%20year%2C%20at%20least%20430,you%20household%20from%20CO%20poisoning>

website⁴—we believe additional informative measures should be taken to protect Americans from CO poisoning, especially now that more Americans are staying home during the pandemic.

We recommend that the CPSC take action to better educate and inform families about the risks associated with improper methods to heat and power homes and work with the media to share this critical information. We also respectfully request that you respond to the following questions:

1. What steps are the CPSC taking to help prevent incidents of CO poisoning at home during the pandemic?
2. What data has the CPSC collected on the number of CO poisoning at-home accidents since the pandemic began?
3. What actions has the CPSC taken to collaborate with the media and other federal and state agencies to help educate families about the risk of CO poisoning at-home during the pandemic and ways that families can mitigate this risk?
4. Does the CPSC need additional resources to investigate the increase in CO poisoning during the pandemic and take appropriate measures to help educate the population?

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



John Hoeven
United States Senator

⁴ Consumer Product Safety Commission. *Protect Your Family During the Catastrophic Winter Storms*. (2021, Feb. 18). Retrieved from <https://cpsc.gov/Newsroom/News-Releases/2021/Protect-Your-Family-During-the-Catastrophic-Winter-Storms>