

## Report of the Year 2024 - January 2024 to January 2025

### General comments

#### The charity became aware of two important and shocking reports on gas cookers

##### 1. CLASP report on gas cookers

<https://www.clasp.ngo/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Gas-Report.pdf>

New research suggestions phasing out gas cooking appliances across the EU-27, in favour of electric alternatives.

Main points:

Indoor air pollution from gas cooking harms people.

Gas is not 'natural' or 'clean'.

Cooking with gas is costly.

Ventilation is not enough.

Gas cooking undermines EU targets to become a climate-neutral economy by 2050.

Gas cooking undermines the EU's electrification and efficiency agenda.

Clean hydrogen is not a viable cooking fuel.

This report states that cooking with gas releases hazardous air pollutants into our homes. 'It was highlighted by several medical doctors that long-term exposure to low levels of CO can increase chances of dementia and, possibly, Parkinsonism.'

*Note Although this CLASP was a 2023 report, we only heard about this in March 2024.*

##### 2. EU report that gas stoves kill 40,000 in EU per year

<https://research.birmingham.ac.uk/en/clippings/gas-stoves-linked-to-40000-premature-deaths-in-europe-annually>

The researchers attributed 36,031 early deaths each year to gas cookers in the EU, and a further 3,928 in the UK. They say their estimates are conservative because they only considered the health effects of nitrogen dioxide (NO<sup>2</sup>), and **not** other gases such as carbon monoxide and benzene.

Despite these important reports the year has been filled with very hard work and little success. In January Stephanie had a virtual meeting with Mary O'Shaughnessy, Project Manager of Cadent. Very good meeting.

Stephanie had a virtual meeting with Ian McCluskey, Head of Technical and Policy at IGEM, (the Institute of Gas Engineers & Managers) to try to persuade IGEM to lead on testing for CO.

We published our Report of the Year 2023 on our website and updated statistics of deaths and charts. See <https://www.co-gassafety.co.uk/information/annual-report-2023/>.

Stephanie was contacted by Cathy Foley, Hudson's mother, in February through a friend who was attending the same bereavement group as Cathy. We suggested she contact her MP and APPCOG. Hudson Foley, aged 24, tragically died of CO in Quito, Ecuador, in 2023 while on a gap year. Hudson's parents had paid a company to advise on what was necessary, but a CO alarm was not recommended, although other far more expensive kit was.

Cathy and CO-Gas Safety lobbied APPCOG (the All Party Parliamentary Carbon Monoxide Group), about a media campaign, insurance, CO alarms to EN BS 50291 to be sold at ports, and repatriation. Also, that gap year companies should put CO alarms on the kit list. Nearly all these

topics Molly Maher and Stephanie had addressed at least 20 years ago. APPCOG worked hard on these topics.

BBC Breakfast interviewed Cathy Foley and her son Jordan being interviewed. They were very good indeed. We posted a News item for our website based on this, on July 31 2024.

<https://www.co-gassafety.co.uk/pack-safe-appeal/>.

Please also visit <https://www.safertourism.org.uk/pack-co-safe>

Cathy Foley wrote informing us that her friend, Paul Kehoe CBE, had posted a request on LinkedIn for shops in airports to sell CO alarms. We found the post and added a post thanking Paul and suggesting all ports, sea and air, sell CO alarms to EN BS 50291. We also added that people not going abroad should have their appliances serviced etc.

In spite of efforts made by Cathy, Paul Kehoe, the Safer Tourism Foundation, CO-Gas Safety and APPCOG, it seems that the Foreign Office is not going to change its advice re CO, i.e. the FO will continue to fail to mention CO. Nor will the government find any way to encourage shops in sea or airports or gap year companies to sell or recommend CO alarms. We can understand that legislation might be difficult but surely government could at least give warnings about CO and ask companies involved in making money by providing apparent good advice, to give it?

The Gas Distribution Networks (GDNs) a group of four companies and together run the gas emergency service). During the summer we worked with gas experts on an idea for a film based on EDF's *The Hardest Day* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PvTaYFf0aOM>) and put this to the CO Group of GDNs. Sadly, the GDNs didn't wish to do this. Yet the GDNs have a great deal of funding from Ofgem on a UIOLI (Use It Or Lose It) basis. The sticking point might be the restrictions put on the funding by Ofgem.

We updated our E-Learning course with Roland Johns. Obtained agreement to send this to Hilary Wareing provided she wasn't using it to make a profit. She's been asked to write new algorithms.

We lobbied again to be asked to COMED meetings to represent survivors and families. We wrote to Isabella Myers to ask this too and pointed out that medics would find diagnosis easier if tests of the air in the home were undertaken, whenever practicable. As we are not invited to COMED meetings, despite our requests to be invited, we asked Isabella Myers to ask the COMED members to support this.

There has been a recent Healthy Homes meeting and apparently the algorithm for GPs has some hope of leading to testing the air in the home for CO. But surely this is only because, thanks to Ofgem, the GDNs now have funding for testing homes of vulnerable customers for CO? We still have no idea of when all the four companies will test for CO, or how they do this, or how GPs will be made aware of this - if indeed that is the intention.

In March, Stephanie wrote to Gaelan Komen of APPCOG about advice from the Foreign Office re: going to various countries – still nothing included about CO.

<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/world-news/latest-foreign-office-travel-advice-28876485>

Re: selling CO alarms at airports – could politicians for APPCOG and COGDEM come out and speak about this? Also could they agitate for meeting with HSE's Minister Chloe Smith?

Sent email to Ian McCluskey asking IGEM to actively support and lobby HSE about testing for CO for all consumers whenever practicable, and record PPM of CO and provide this to survivors

and medics. This would help survivors, save NHS funds and promote the reputation of RGEs and the gas industry, hopefully worldwide.

In April Stephanie attended the IGEM Gas Utilisation (Tuesday 16 April 2024 at the National Conference Centre) and met Caroline Lane from the HSE. She was very nice but determined to tell me that HSE was not interested in testing for CO or asking for a mandatory requirement for the gas emergency service to test, or for it to be mandatory to test whenever practicable. Stephanie argued that how could you make anyone safe from CO without doing this? She didn't seem to have a response.

Wrote to Ofgem consumer advice about no mention of CO in their energy advice.

Wrote to Steve Critchlow to thank him for his talk on explosions. Also to discuss the confusion over when a RGE with the qualification CMDDA1 was required and when not. Asked him to clarify a RGE's responsibilities under 26.9 & BS7967, especially with regard to sweep tests for CO? Also asked him how an ordinary consumer can access a RGE with CMDDA1 when that consumer can afford to pay and is therefore not on the Priority Services Register?

Wrote to Gaelan Komen of APPCOG and attached email to Professor Sani Dimitroulopoulou in 2017 about the algorithm. Delighted to hear testing can now be prescribed but will it actually happen yet as one company still only training to test? Really want to be put in touch with SIA (working with Cadent on the data) to offer our data and fields on deaths from CO from 1995.

Heard from Rosalie Callway of Town and Country Planning and Healthy Homes is happy to support call for indoor air quality testing and CO risk. Needs a blog of 600-800 words. Thanked her and did so.

Stephanie Peacock MP and Lord Hunt of Kings Heath have had to step down from CO-Gas Safety because of government appointments.

In September we attended the start of Gas Safety Week and received an impression that at last there was some recognition of the need to establish a properly set up and funded body both to help survivors and learn from each incident. However, this has not materialised, so far at least. Stephanie also asked about data now that the gas emergency service is now testing for CO in some cases.

In September and October there were many virtual meetings with the four companies that run the gas emergency service. CO-Gas Safety noticed that questions were not seen by all and, on break-outs, CO-Gas Safety was put in a sub-group of organisations such as Housing Associations, which meant again that our points were not heard by the company concerned.

On 16<sup>th</sup> October Stephanie was invited and gave the keynote talk at a CORT (Carbon monoxide Research Trust) event, 'Voicing Victims' Stories'. Stephanie was honoured to be asked but disappointed that this was at a hotel rather than at Liverpool John Moore's University as expected.

Three deaths in a care home in Swanage were reported in October. Stephanie was contacted by the BBC for a telephone interview the next day. Later the interview was cancelled due to the arrest of the owner of the care home and fear of jeopardising any legal case.

We wrote to Lloyd Hutton, MP for Swanage, and to the Coroner for Swanage introducing ourselves, what we do, and offering victim support. We also expressed our gratitude for help from Coroners and their officers and ideas for prevention of future deaths.

In October we published on our website 'Law, Practice and Prevention of Deaths and Injuries from Unintentional Carbon Monoxide in the UK – with suggestions for other countries' written by Stephanie Trotter. Stephanie did so because Charon McNabbs of NCOAA (USA National Carbon Monoxide Awareness Association <https://www.ncoaa.us/>) asked her to write about the law in the UK on carbon monoxide. Please see <https://www.co-gassafety.co.uk/resources/law-practice-prevention/>.

We made efforts to contact people, especially those who've lost children. We continue to particularly ask GDNs to help us but our contact details are usually not passed on e.g. four year old killed <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-66436904>.

CO-Gas Safety is apparently not an 'approved body' according to HSE, yet there is no other body that specifically helps survivors/victims of CO and their family members. We have asked how we become 'an approved body' but not received a response. It's interesting that our name and email address are on the ONS website (scroll down to the bottom of the following page: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/aboutus/transparencyandgovernance/freedomofinformationfoi/carbonmonoxidedeathsandpoisoningsforthepast10years>).

Throughout the year we have cooperated with any person who, or body which, wanted survivors/victims or their family members for media purposes, to raise awareness of CO, e.g. for CO Awareness week.

We also worked hard throughout the year to be allowed to contribute fields for data collection to data being collected by GDNs and SIA, which is helping the GDNs with the data. We are not sure if parts per million of CO, where found, or the name of the gas engineer carrying out the tests, are being given to those exposed. This should be done in writing (either hard copy or digitally) so that it can be passed to their medics. Individual engineers may do this, especially if asked, but most people don't know enough about CO to ask for this.

The data we have seen shows CO evident in some entries but had no parts per million recorded. We've tried persistently to find out for some time, particularly during this last year and particularly in the last three months, if these levels are indeed recorded. We conclude that the parts per million of CO, where found, hasn't, isn't, and won't been recorded in the data and there are no plans to do so. Nor were there any details of the appliance which emitted the CO. Data is only as good as the work on the facts you feed into it. What a wasted opportunity.

In any case, the GDNs say they use 'visual signs' to decide whether or not to test for CO, when the whole problem with CO is that it cannot be sensed using human senses!

Servicing and chimney/flue sweeping are vital, but people rich or poor often don't know that: -

1. Servicing and chimney/flue sweeping are life-or-death issues and
2. A serviced appliance with a clean flue, (when a flue is fitted), is also more efficient, so provides more energy for less carbon fuel burned.

In other words, servicing saves lives and preserves health, as well as saving some pollution and cost.

CO alarms to EN 50291 are often put forward as the answer to CO but although they prevent death and serious injury, they are not health monitors – there is huge confusion about this. It is surely far better to prevent CO being created in the first place? The WHO is continually reassessing their guidelines for toxins, which are now only about 4 PPM over 24 hours for CO.

There is a need for health visitors and anyone visiting a home etc. to have PAMs (Personal Alarm Monitors) for CO.

In November Stephanie informed the directors that her article in *International Fire & Safety Journal* had been published and sent a link <https://internationalfireandsafetyjournal.com/the-silent-threat-co-gas-safety-explains-the-unseen-dangers-of-carbon-monoxide-poisoning/>. The journal has a worldwide circulation of 200,000. Stephanie is indebted to the editor Ian Hoey for his excellent editing job.

Following the unfortunate death of three people due to carbon monoxide poisoning at a care home in Swanage, APPCOG member Julia Buckley MP raised a parliamentary question on considerations to remove the exemption of care homes in the Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (England) Regulations 2015 and its impact on public health.

Stephen Kinnock MP, Minister of State for Health and Social Care, shared that there are currently no plans to assess the impact of removing this exemption.

In December we sent an email to Dan Edwards, Chair of the GDN CO Group. This congratulated the GDNs on funding carers but made the point that, if there was testing for CO, perhaps there would be fewer people who needed carers. <https://www.herald.wales/national-news/health/uk-gas-networks-partner-with-carers-trust-to-provide-vital-and-urgent-financial-support/>

Dr Mary O'Shaughnessy, Safeguarding Specialist at Cadent Gas Limited, contacted Stephanie on LinkedIn. She also copied Earl Richards – responding to Stephanie's comment, Mary stated, 'surely means only went to replacement not testing?' Stephanie wrote 'you'd think that wouldn't you?' Stephanie also emailed her and sent her our case studies link and Wayne Merry's cooker data and also Roland Johns' quote on the website that **there should be a duty on all RGEs (Registered Gas Engineers) to test for CO.**

#### **Monday 16.12.24 APPCOG Event, Voicing Victims' Stories**

Al Pinkerton MP was excellent. Stephanie gave him an AICO CO alarm and praised its downloadable feature. Stephanie met Cathy Foley, Jordan Foley (Cathy's son) and also Claire, Cathy's friend. It was a good meeting. Jerry Mills, father of Tom Mills, kept saying that if only they'd known what to do when the CO alarm sounded... Dan Edwards, of SGN (Scotia Gas Networks), suggested a line drawing on every CO alarm showing it sounding and people getting outside. Stephanie thought this was an excellent idea and followed this up with an email. Emilia (case worker for Joe Robertson's MP – Stephanie's MP) wrote to say he would ask some PQs. Replied to say would write from home.

APPCOG has kindly recognised the need for a body like us. CO-Gas Safety facilitated the attendance of all the survivors/victims and family members at the event on 16<sup>th</sup> December, very near Christmas. CO-Gas Safety also provided the expenses of the survivors (who submitted receipts) in attending, some having to stay overnight as the meeting was too early on Monday to be certain of arriving in time. The charity also provided lunch afterwards. Although Gaelan Komen thanked us all very nicely at the time, the charity was not even mentioned in APPCOG's December update.

In the December APPCOG newsletter it was reported that Andrew Gwynne, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Public Health and Prevention, responded to a letter by Paul Davies MP (Chair of APPCOG) pressing for carbon monoxide poisoning to be recognised as a serious public health concern. The letter from Paul Davies MP emphasised the health burden of carbon monoxide poisoning and the need for government communication and leadership on the issue. We have thanked Paul Davies MP for that and are meeting him in early February.

In January 2025 Stephanie sent Gaelan Komen, manager of APPCOG, a link about TV stats – they seemed to show that TV is far from dead as a medium for advertising or public warnings. <https://www.finder.com/uk/stats-facts/tv-statistics> British Gas certainly uses prime-time TV!

We received a ‘Victims access to justice and support’ email. We sent this to APPCOG and listed the main problems, which were: -

1. Victims not listened to.
2. Lack of proof.
3. Ignoring victims when some action could make a difference, e.g. putting the victims in touch with each other, which could have made a difference earlier with regard to the Post Office Horizon scandal.

We wrote to Jonathan Brearley, CEO of Ofgem, asking him to write to HSE and including a draft. This asked HSE to respond to whether or not testing for CO was a safety issue and if HSE thought this was not, to please give reasons to CO-Gas Safety.

## General points

CO-Gas Safety is unable to obtain a meeting with Sir Stephen Timms, who is the Minister responsible for the HSE. We note that it is being reported that meetings with Ministers are apparently being offered for £30,000 <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2024/oct/04/dont-do-it-again-miliband-tells-labour-over-30000-breakfast-with-minister>

COMED (the medical group on CO under APPCOG) doesn’t meet often, perhaps twice a year, and it seems CO-Gas Safety is not welcome, yet survivors are desperate for medical advice. Survivors would also be pleased to provide their feedback to medics on their experiences.

It seems from what little we’ve gleaned from the publicly available data we have received from NGN (Northern Gas Networks) that the GDNs do not record parts per million of CO in their data. Northern Gas Networks kindly sent us <https://northerngasopendataportal.co.uk/>.

Two other bodies with millions in funding exist: the Gas Safety Trust, which offers good e-learning courses about CO; and CORT (the Carbon monoxide Research Trust), which gives grants for good research. Yet neither offers specific help to victims/survivors/families.

We seem to be the only body to try to offer specific advice to survivors/victims of CO and their family members, which should be done for the sake of those affected. However, there is another reason, which is that each incident is an opportunity for research. We have learned everything from victims/survivors/families, and we run their ideas past industry for practicality and cost.

There were many missed opportunities to improve the system, for example the failure to take up our idea of a film to warn about carbon monoxide although there is UIOLI (Use It Or Lose It) funding from Ofgem. Does neither the fuel industry nor government want to improve CO safety?

In this year of very hard voluntary work, we have more than proved the need for a body to help victims/survivors and families of those who've died of CO, and lobby for improvements to prevent future deaths and injuries. We found out the basics of what needed to be done very quickly, within weeks or months of starting in 1995. What was and still is needed:

1. Increased awareness by films, ideally on prime-time TV and social media. These could also be accessed by use of QR codes put up in bus shelters, stations, airports, harbours, doctors' surgeries, sailing clubs etc.
2. Testing air in homes for CO by the gas emergency service whenever practicable.

Additions we now ask for:

3. A mandatory duty on all Gas Safe Registered Engineers to test air in homes for CO and emissions from appliances, whenever practicable.
4. That all engineers and chimney sweeps, who deal with cooking or heating in homes, cars or boats, be registered by law in the same way as gas engineers.
5. Any CO found be given in parts per million to those exposed, or who could have been exposed, in writing/digitally for them and their medics. This should also be recorded in data sets with other fields (e.g. appliance type, fuel etc.) also identified and documented.
6. A body should be properly set up and funded to do what CO-Gas Safety has been doing on a shoestring and voluntarily for 30 years.
7. Data can then be collected, collated and published, and improvements to safety made. Data will improve awareness too.

## Conclusion

Even more work has been done by CO-Gas Safety, but little action from industry or government. Yet government action is vital in order to make it mandatory to test the air in the home and the emissions from appliances whenever practicable.

CO-Gas Safety has managed to raise some awareness and Ofgem has provided funds for the gas emergency service to test for CO in homes of 'customers in vulnerable situations'. But anyone can be injured or killed by CO, however healthy, wealthy or wise.

GPs need to be able to order free tests for CO for their patients in their homes, to test the air and emissions from gas appliances (ideally for other carbon-fuelled appliances too), yet for years this has been talked about endlessly and not achieved. We think this is now achievable, but the Algorithm for GPs has not yet been changed.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7568fb40f0b6360e473e60/CO\\_diagnosis\\_algorithm\\_2015.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7568fb40f0b6360e473e60/CO_diagnosis_algorithm_2015.pdf)

Some tests for CO in homes are now being done and recorded but the parts per million of CO found, and other vital issues, are not being recorded in publicly-accessible data.

Tests for CO, properly done and recorded, would make people safer by identifying any source of CO as well as assisting those exposed to CO and their medics. Tragedies would be avoided or lessened, NHS funds and social security would be saved. Awareness would be raised. Reliable data would be collected, collated and hopefully published, leading to safety improvements.

We end this year with an invitation to have a short meeting with Paul Davies MP, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Carbon Monoxide Group on the 3<sup>rd</sup> February. We hope that this just might produce some much-needed action.

Stephanie Trotter OBE  
President & Director CO-Gas Safety

*Note In our opinion, there should be no fear of legal cases preventing these big energy companies from taking action. This is because even if a customer could prove huge exposure, it is usually the fault of the customer who did not know that a boiler needs to be serviced regularly, or a chimney swept etc. Sometimes, but thankfully rarely, it is the fault of a registered Gas Safe engineer, as it was with the death of Zoe Anderson in 2010 when the engineer failed to connect the flue. Testing for CO after a job should have prevented this death.*

Grateful thanks to all the survivors/victims and family members who have helped us this year and throughout our 30 years. Thanks too to all the advice and help we've received from the good people in industry and government. Thank you to the anonymous donor of £100,000 in 2020.

Thank you to Jonathan Kane of Kane International for his time, optimism, advice and support and for his financial backing, without which CO-Gas Safety would not have survived. Also, thanks to Jennifer Wood for her checking and copy editor skills.

Thanks too to my husband, John Trotter, for all his help.