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Purpose Preventing carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning is increasingly recognised by safety advocates as a public health priority. CO alarms are the best defence against CO poisoning yet little attention has been placed on developing and evaluating comprehensive CO programs. The presentation shares CO knowledge, attitudes and practices from a household survey conducted in an urban area prior to the implementation of a community intervention trial to enhance a fire departments home visit program.

Methods Interview households were randomly selected from 12 census tracks selected for comparability on fire department home visit rates, fire rates and vacancy rates. A letter mailed to the home preceded an interview team who, after consent, led participants through a structured survey and observation to confirm CO alarms.

Results After applying exclusion criteria (non-English speakers, businesses, refusals), 618 households were consented; 609 completed the survey, for a response rate of 46%. The typical respondent is a Black (60%) female (70%) with a high school diploma or less (52%) and a per capita income of $25,000 or less (74%). Despite reporting numerous CO sources in homes (gas furnaces (78%), water heaters (66%) and stoves (86%)) and a recognition that CO alarms save lives (96%), CO alarms were reported in only 33% of homes and confirmed by observation in only 27%. Additional knowledge and attitude results will be presented.

Conclusions More effort is needed to promote the life-saving benefits of CO alarms so that more households will be protected by them.

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E M McDonald*, W Shields, R Stepnitz, S Frattaroli, D Valentine, A C Gielen
Correspondence: Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Center for Injury Research and Policy 624 N. Broadway, Room 731 Baltimore, MD 21205, 21211, USA