West Virginia DHHR Program Saves Family from Deadly Leak; Simple Breath Test Reveals Deadly Carbon Monoxide (CO) Leak in Home

CHARLESTON, W.Va., April 6, 2005 /PRNewswire via COMTEX/ -- When the office of Maternal, Child and Family Health, a division of the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, began using breath carbon monoxide monitors to help pregnant women quit smoking, they had no idea that those monitors might also help save these women and their families from carbon monoxide poisoning - but that's exactly what happened.

The incident occurred when a designated care coordinator with "Right From The Start," a project of the DHHR, was conducting a routine visit at the family's residence. "She pulled out her Smokerlyzer(R) (as the monitors are known) and was shocked by what she saw," said Ruth Davis, the supervisor for the region where the incident occurred. "The monitors normally read around 1 or 2 ppm (parts per million) when you first turn them on. But this time, it was reading up around 80 ppm, a very dangerous level. The monitor was actually sampling the air in the house." According to Davis, the family was complaining of nausea and headaches, two symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning. When the DCC tested the mother on the Smokerlyzer, her personal reading was 89 ppm. The family was immediately removed from the house and a subsequent check by authorities revealed that the house did indeed have dangerously high carbon monoxide levels.

According to Bruce Evans, a toxicology instructor with the National Fire Academy, "High levels of carbon monoxide exposure can result in loss of consciousness and even death. Carbon monoxide poisoning is often misdiagnosed because the symptoms are mistaken for the flu."

Ruth Davis said that the DCC would be recommended for a governor's recognition award. "The quick actions of the DCC and the use of the Smokerlyzer helped to save this family's lives. Recommending her for this award is a great way of showing our appreciation for how she handled the situation."

New Jersey-based Bedfont Scientific, the company that manufactures the Smokerlyzer, was very happy to learn that more lives were saved as a result of these monitors. "We knew from clinical studies that the Smokerlyzers were proven to help people quit smoking, but this situation reaffirms that they also serve a larger public good," said company spokesman Jason Aversano. "I think a lot of credit has to go to the State of West Virginia and 'Right From The Start,' as this project is going to help a lot of people and has the potential of saving a lot more lives. The benefit of these monitors is that they can detect carbon monoxide that you are taking into your body, whether that be from your home, vehicle or workplace - something that a simple in-home CO detector cannot do."

Bedfont also announced that they would be donating a personal Smokerlyzer CO breath tester to the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, to present to the family so that they would be able to test themselves for elevated CO levels on their own.

SOURCE West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources

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