

SILENT BUT DEADLY

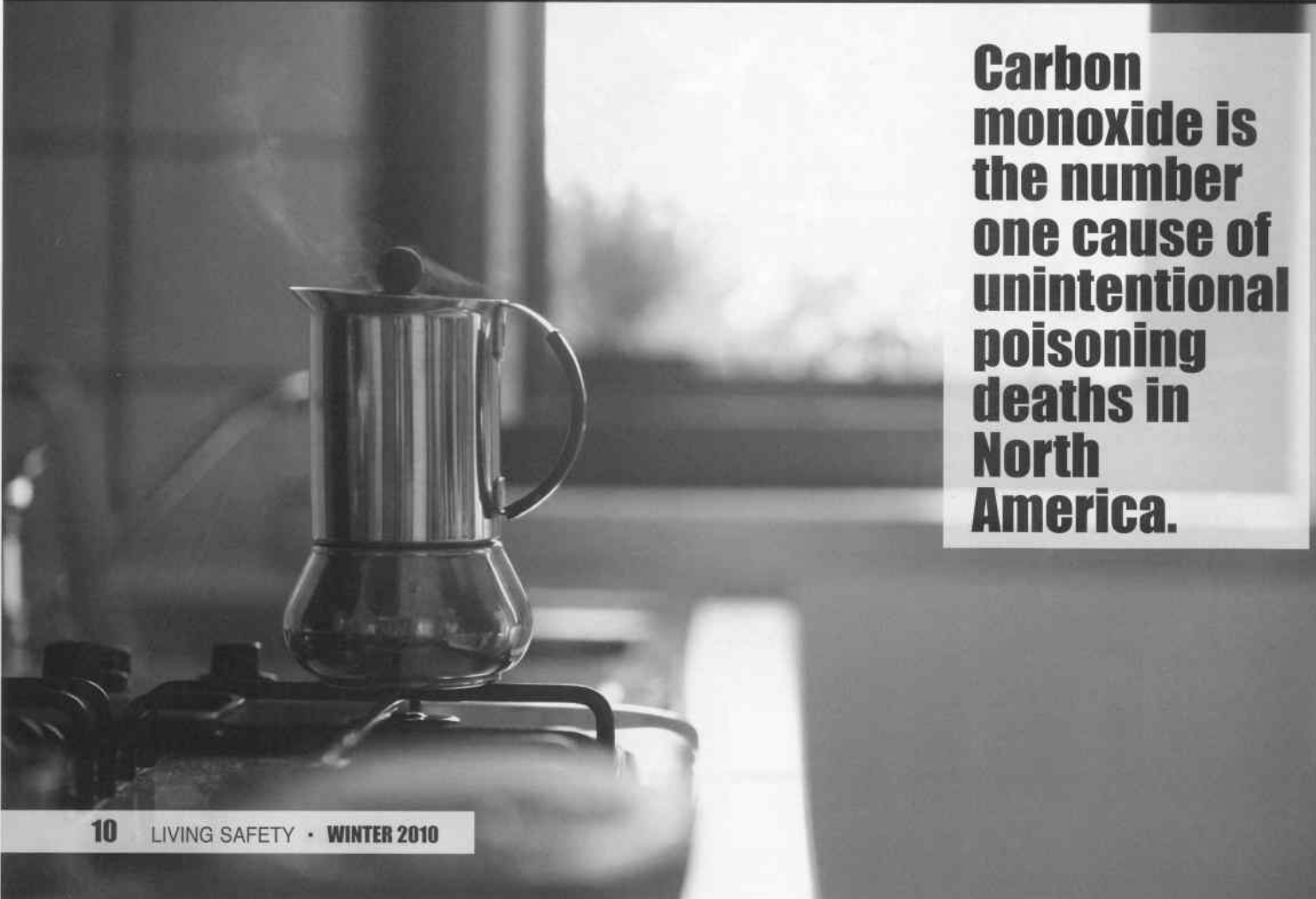
By Toby A. Welch

In December 2008, OPP Constable Laurie Hawkins failed to show up for work. Police headed for her home, as that was unusual for Hawkins. The officers found Constable Hawkins desperately clinging to life on the floor of her son's bedroom. Her 12-year-old son, Jordan, her 14-year-old daughter, Cassandra, and her husband, Richard, were all dead in the home. Investigators discovered that the small exhaust vent that funneled carbon monoxide (CO) from the gas fireplace out through the chimney was completely blocked from years of use. They did not own a CO detector and the chimney hadn't been cleaned in years or serviced by a qualified heating and ventilation expert. Laurie clung to life for another eight days but eventually succumbed to the carbon monoxide poisoning.

Carbon monoxide is a toxic gas that continues to take the lives of Canadians.

- January 2010 – An elderly couple and their adult daughter were found dead from carbon monoxide poisoning in Buckingham, Quebec. They had no power due to an ice storm and were using a generator in their garage – the cause of the deadly levels of CO in the house.
- June 2010 – An Edmonton woman launched a \$6 million lawsuit after suffering irreparable physical damage due to carbon monoxide poisoning while in her hotel room in the Dominican Republic. Her trip companion died from the toxic fumes.
- July 2010 – Nine people had to be taken to hospital from a Winners store in Barrhaven, Ontario; all had to be treated for carbon monoxide poisoning. Turns out the fumes had built up from a propane-powered floor polishing machine used that morning in the store.
- August 2010 – A Lethbridge, Alberta, mother and her teenage son were found dead in their home after succumbing to carbon monoxide poisoning.
- August 2010 – Four teens who were attending the Big Valley Jamboree in Camrose, Alberta, suffered severe carbon monoxide poisoning when they covered their trailer with tarps to keep out the rain. It is believed the tarps covered the vents and restricted airflow while trapping the carbon monoxide in the trailer.

As Kidde Canada, the Canadian industry leader in protecting people and property from the dangers of fire, pointed out, "Carbon monoxide (CO) is a serious danger and one that many people do not understand. It is the number one cause of unintentional poisoning deaths in North America. In Canada, there are approximately 1,000 reported poisonings and 250 deaths per year due to carbon monoxide."



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