



## AN ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH TRACKING STORY

# INCREASING THE NUMBER OF CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS IN LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS

Washburn County, Wisconsin

### THE PROBLEM

Washburn County is located in the far northern part of Wisconsin, where heating sources that use gas, wood, or propane are commonly found. Using their [2017 County Environmental Health Profile](#), Washburn County Health Department staff learned their rate of emergency room visits for carbon monoxide poisoning was 3 ½ times higher than the Wisconsin rate. Given their higher burden, staff designed a project to address carbon monoxide poisoning with a focus on their most vulnerable populations.

### THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT'S SOLUTION

Health department staff established income eligibility requirements in order to distribute life-saving carbon monoxide detectors to those most in need. They developed partnerships with the Spooner Fire District, Washburn County Human Services Fuel Assistance Program, food pantries, Washburn County WIC, and other agencies that work directly with this population. Staff used the Wisconsin Electronic Disease Surveillance System to connect people who reported to the emergency room for carbon monoxide poisoning with detectors.

### THE PUBLIC HEALTH IMPACT

In total, Washburn County Health Department staff provided detectors to 100 low-income households, or about 20% of the low-income households in their county. Using the surveillance system, they were able to give carbon monoxide detectors to seven people who were seen in the emergency room for carbon monoxide poisoning during the year. Partners and staff are now trained to educate clients about carbon monoxide poisoning. As a result of this project, many low-income households in Washburn County know the risks of carbon monoxide exposure and have received detectors, which will help prevent future poisonings.

EXPLORE YOUR COUNTY'S  
CARBON MONOXIDE DATA:

[dhs.wisconsin.gov/epht](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/epht)

WISCONSIN ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH TRACKING PROGRAM  
Bureau of Environmental and Occupational Health

[dhs.wisconsin.gov/epht](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/epht) | FEBRUARY 2020 | [dhstracking@wi.gov](mailto:dhstracking@wi.gov)  
Department of Health Services | Division of Public Health | P-02276b (02/2020)

This project funded by the Tracking team's *Taking Action with Data* program.

