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Malfunctioning air conditioner kills six

May 9, 2000
 Web posted at: 3:50 a.m. EDT (0750 GMT)

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Kranz, center, was carried out of his home on a stretcher

ROSLYN HEIGHTS, New York -- An air conditioner turned on early to help a family in Long Island cope with an unseasonable heat wave resulted in the deaths of six people Sunday, poisoned by carbon monoxide.

Dr. Andrei Kranz returned home from his overnight shift at a Nassau County hospital to find the bodies of his 2-year-old daughter, his parents, a family nanny and two family friends. His wife and 17-year-old daughter, on a visit to Romania, were not home at the time.

The poisonings occurred because the intake vents in the home's air conditioner were not working properly, police said. One of the intake vents was closed and another was clogged with leaves, so the unit could draw air only from the room it shared with a natural gas furnace.

Police said the air-conditioner and the furnace, housed in a single room, were both turned on because the weather had rapidly gone from cool to unseasonably hot.

Carbon monoxide buildup

Kranz had a carbon monoxide detector in the house, but police said he had disconnected it. "One of the first statements he made was that he had problems with the carbon monoxide detector being too sensitive and he had shut it off," a police spokesman said.

Authorities say there is evidence there had been a buildup of carbon monoxide in the days before the tragedy inside and outside the Kranz house.



Kranz's 2-year-old daughter, seen in this photo, died as a result of carbon monoxide poisoning

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"The air conditioner was causing a back draft, sucking the air down the flue of the heater and recirculating it through the house," Nassau County Police Sgt. Robert Edwards said.

"There's any number of things that could dissipate the carbon monoxide. I don't know why it became critical mass yesterday. Maybe the windows were not open. The doors may have been closed. I can't answer that," Edwards said.

Police identified the six victims as Kranz's daughter, Simina; his parents, Marcus Kranz, 85, and Victoria Kranz, 74; a family nanny, Emelia Dumtru, 58; and two family friends, Emil Ioan Campeanu, 75 and Maria Mihaela Campeanu, 68.

Disabled detector

A neighbor, Donna Bernstein, said, "This could have all been so easily avoided," referring to the disabled detector.

About 200 people die and 5,000 are injured each year as the result of carbon monoxide poisonings, according to the Consumer Products Safety Commission.

The commission says the deaths and injuries are usually caused by improperly used or malfunctioning equipment aggravated by changes in construction that limit the amount of fresh air flowing into homes and other buildings.

There are two types of carbon monoxide detectors: one runs on household electric current; the other on batteries. Both should ideally meet standards set by the Underwriters Laboratory. It is recommended that detectors be installed on each floor of a residence.

Authorities say the early stages of carbon monoxide poisoning produce flu-like symptoms of nausea, headaches and dizziness and the best initial treatment is fresh air. If an alarm goes off or if a member of a household is experiencing the telltale symptoms, a 911 call should be made.

CNN National Correspondent [Gary Tuchman](#), the [Associated Press](#) and [Reuters](#) contributed to this report.

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