



Weekly Safety Meeting

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless, toxic gas that interferes with the oxygen-carrying capacity of blood. CO is non-irritating and can overcome persons without warning. Many people die from CO poisoning, usually while using gasoline powered tools and generators in buildings, near recreational vehicles and semi-enclosed spaces without adequate ventilation.

Breathing carbon monoxide becomes harmful because it displaces oxygen in the blood and thus deprives the heart, brain, and other vital organs of oxygen. Large amounts of CO can overcome you in minutes, without any warning, causing you to lose consciousness and suffocate.

CO poisoning can be reversed if caught in time. But even if you recover, acute poisoning may result in permanent damage to the parts of your body that require a lot of oxygen, such as the heart and brain. Significant reproductive risk is also associated with CO poisoning.

Some Sources of Exposure:

- Portable generators/generators in or near buildings;
- Concrete cutting saws, compressors;
- Power trowels, floor buffers, space heaters; and
- Welding, gasoline powered pumps.

In addition, if your employees are working in confined spaces where the presence of CO is suspected, you must ensure that workers test for oxygen sufficiency before entering.

Symptoms of CO Exposure:

- Headaches, dizziness, drowsiness; and
- Nausea vomiting, tightness across the chest.

Preventing CO Exposure:

- Never use a generator indoors or near, or in, enclosed or partially enclosed spaces such as garages, crawl spaces, and basements. Opening windows and doors in an enclosed space may prevent CO buildup;
- Make sure the generator has 3-4 feet of clear space on all sides and above it to ensure adequate ventilation;
- Do not use a generator outdoors if placed near doors, windows, or vents, which could allow CO to enter and build up in occupied spaces;

- When using space heaters and stoves, ensure that they are in good working order to reduce CO buildup and never use in enclosed spaces or indoors;
- Consider using tools powered by electricity or compressed air, if available; and
- If you experience symptoms of CO poisoning, get to fresh air right away and seek immediate medical attention.

If Someone Has Been Poisoned:

When you suspect CO poisoning, promptly taking the following actions can save lives:

- Move the victim immediately to fresh air in an open area;
- Call 911 or another local emergency number for medical attention or assistance;
- Administer 100-percent oxygen using a tight-fitting mask if the victim is breathing;
- Administer cardiopulmonary resuscitation if the victim has stopped breathing.;
- Warning: You may be exposed to fatal levels of CO poisoning in a rescue attempt; and
- Rescuers should be skilled at performing recovery operations and using recovery equipment.

Employers should make sure that rescuers are not exposed to dangerous CO levels when performing rescue operations.

Remember:

Prevent carbon monoxide poisoning by reporting any situation to your employer that may lead to CO build up. Be alert to ventilation problems, especially where gases or burning fuels may be released.

WATCH OUT FOR INVISIBLE GASES!!

