



Weekly Safety Meeting

Carbon Monoxide Safety

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless gas that can cause sudden illness and death if inhaled. When we experience power outages during emergencies such as hurricanes or winter storms, we often make use of alternative sources of fuel or electricity for heating, cooling, or cooking. Those alternative sources can cause CO to build up in our home, garage, or camper and poison the people and animals inside.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 400 people die in the U. S. from accidental, non-fire related CO poisoning every year.

To explain this simply, CO is found in combustion fumes, such as those produced by small gasoline engines, stoves, generators, lanterns, and gas ranges, or by burning charcoal and wood. CO from these sources can build up in enclosed or partially enclosed spaces. People and animals in these spaces can be poisoned and can die from simply breathing CO.

How to Recognize CO Poisoning

As we are exposed to CO, we can lose consciousness and eventually die. The most common symptoms of CO poisoning are headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, chest pain, and confusion. People who are sleeping or who have been drinking alcohol can die from CO poisoning before ever having symptoms.

Important CO Poisoning Prevention Tips

If CO poisoning is suspected, call 911 or your local Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222, or consult a health care professional right away. Follow these tips to prevent CO poisoning:

- Never use a gas range or oven to heat a home;
- Never leave the motor running in a vehicle parked in an enclosed or partially enclosed space, such as a garage;
- Never use a generator, pressure washer, or any gasoline-powered engine inside your home, basement, or garage or less than 20 feet from any window, door, or vent. Use an extension cord that is more than 20 feet long to keep the generator at a safe distance;
- When using a generator, use a battery-powered or battery backup CO detector in your home;
- Never run a generator, pressure washer, or any gasoline-powered engine inside a basement, garage, or other enclosed structure, even if the doors or windows are open, unless the equipment is professionally installed and vented. Keep vents and flues free of debris, especially if winds are high. Flying debris can block ventilation lines;

- Never use a charcoal grill, hibachi, lantern, or portable camping stove inside a home, tent, or camper; and
- If conditions are too hot or too cold, seek shelter with friends or at a community shelter.

Remember:

Generators, grills, camp stoves, or other gasoline, propane, natural gas, or charcoal-burning devices should never be used inside a home, basement, garage, or camper – or even outside near an open window.

Every home should have at least one working carbon monoxide detector. The detector’s batteries should be checked at least twice annually, at the same time smoke detector batteries are checked.

WATCH OUT FOR CARBON MONOXIDE!

