

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Prevention Tips

Carbon Monoxide (CO) poisoning happens more often than people think. CO can overcome a person without warning, usually while using gasoline powered tools or generators inside of buildings or semi-enclosed spaces without adequate ventilation. CO is a toxic gas that is colorless and odorless, which interferes with the oxygen-carrying capacity of blood. Being overcome by CO is serious, as severe CO poisoning causes neurological damage, illness, coma, and death. Since so many tools and equipment produce CO, it's important to understand the symptoms of CO exposure and how it can be prevented. Take a moment and review this list to better understand CO exposure:

Some examples of CO producing sources

- Portable generators/generators in buildings
- Concrete cutting saws
- Power trowels
- Floor buffers
- Space heaters
- Gasoline powered pumps

Symptoms of CO exposure

- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Drowsiness
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Tightness across the chest

CO exposure prevention

- Never use generators 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 there is 3-4 feet of clearance on all sides (including above) of the generator to ensure adequate ventilation.
- Make sure generators are not placed outdoors near windows, doors or vents which could allow CO to enter indoor occupied spaces.
- Make sure space heaters are in good working order before use to reduce CO buildup, and never use in enclosed spaces or indoors.
- When possible, consider using tools powered by electricity or compressed air.
- Immediately get to fresh air and seek medical attention if you experience symptoms of CO poisoning.

Remember, CO poisoning is serious. Steps should always be taken to prevent CO exposure. Your health and safety are important to your organization's mission. Being familiar with how to prevent CO exposure can eliminate an unnecessary accident or injury. Let's do our part to look out for each other and accomplish tasks without incident.

References:

OSHA Quick Card 3282-10N-05, Protect Yourself Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

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