



SafetyAlert

We're Serious About Safety

Carbon Monoxide Safety

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless gas that kills without warning. Overexposure to this silent killer results in hundreds of deaths each year, as well as thousands of hospitalizations. The material provided in this Safety Alert is intended to help you stay well-informed on the dangers of CO, as well as steps to take to prevent exposure to CO poisoning.

At lower levels of exposure, CO causes mild effects that are often mistaken for the flu. These symptoms include headaches, dizziness, disorientation, nausea, and fatigue. The effects of CO exposure can vary greatly from person to person depending on age, overall health and the concentration and length of exposure. Large amounts of CO can overcome you in minutes without warning causing you to lose consciousness and suffocate.



Everyone is at risk for CO poisoning. Medical experts believe with heart or lung problems are at even greater risk for CO poisoning.

Where does CO come from?

Carbon monoxide is a by-product of combustion, and present whenever fuel is burned. It is produced by common home appliances, such as gas or oil furnaces, gas refrigerators, gas clothes dryers, gas ranges, gas water heaters or space heaters, fireplaces, charcoal grills, and wood burning stoves.

For more information on carbon monoxide, contact your local fire department, or visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/co/>

What can employers do?

To reduce the chances of CO poisoning in your workplace, you should take the following actions:

- ☐ Install an effective ventilation system that will remove CO from work areas.
- ☐ Maintain equipment and appliances (for example, water heaters, space heaters, cooking ranges) that can produce CO.
- ☐ Consider switching from gasoline-powered equipment to equipment powered by electricity, batteries, or compressed air if it can be used safely.
- ☐ Prohibit the use of gasoline-powered engines or tools in poorly ventilated areas.
- ☐ Test air regularly in areas where CO may be present, including confined spaces.
- ☐ Install CO monitors with audible alarms.
- ☐ Educate workers about the sources and conditions that may result in CO poisoning as well as the symptoms and control of CO exposure.

What can employees do?

Employees should do the following to reduce the chances of CO poisoning in the workplace:

- ☐ Report any situation to your employer that might cause CO to accumulate.
- ☐ Be alert to ventilation problems especially in enclosed areas where gases of burning fuels may be released.
- ☐ Report promptly complaints of dizziness, drowsiness, or nausea.
- ☐ Avoid overexertion if you suspect CO poisoning, and leave the contaminated area.
- ☐ Tell your doctor that you may have been exposed to CO if you get sick.
- ☐ Avoid the use of gas-powered engines, such as those in power washers as well as heaters and forklifts, while working in enclosed spaces.



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