

Tools for Life – Weekly Health & Safety Meeting



Home Healthy - Home Safe

December 2020

Carbon Monoxide Awareness

Carbon Monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless toxic gas. Because CO is non-irritating it can overcome a person without warning at work or at home. Carbon monoxide is caused by incomplete combustion of gas-powered engines. When the fumes accumulate in enclosed spaces or airtight homes it can become harmful or even deadly. Symptoms of mild to moderate CO exposure can include one or more of the following: headaches, drowsiness, dizziness, nausea, vomiting or tightness across the chest. High levels of CO exposure can lead to unconsciousness and death. If a worker experiences symptoms of CO exposure get them to an area of fresh air and seek medical attention. If you experience these symptoms at home, turn off the gas fired appliances and open all your windows and doors. Call 911.

Common sources of CO exposure at work:

- Portable generators/generators in buildings
- Gas powered tools
- Space heaters
- Welding machines
- Gas powered pumps
- Compressors
- Concrete Cutting Saws

Preventive measures for minimizing CO exposure risks:

- Never use a generator indoors or in partially enclosed spaces
- CO is lighter than air, so it is easily pushed to low spaces, through open doors, windows or vents. Even if a generator or combustion engine is placed outside, be sure it is far away from areas it can flow.
- If using non-electric space heaters, be sure they are used in well ventilated spaces and exhaust is directed out of the enclosed area.
- Always check confined spaces, manholes, or pits for CO before entering.
- Avoid running vehicles or generators close to confined areas.
- Use electric powered tools whenever possible.

HEALTH OR SAFETY REMINDER: Check CO monitors inside your house, just like smoke detectors they need to be tested regularly. You may need to add CO monitors to your home if you have gas fired water heater, furnace, or fireplace as not all smoke detectors also detect carbon monoxide.

Discussion Points/Quiz Questions:

1. Does your house have CO monitors? Do you know?
2. You can always smell carbon monoxide when it is in the air? True or False?
3. What is the best way to relieve exposure symptoms of CO poisoning?