Carbon Monoxide Safety Fatality Report

A 25-year-old man got a job as a laborer, installing carpets in newly-built homes for a small company after a tornado had devastated a small farming community.

The victim and a co-worker began laying carpet in a new house. Electrical service had not yet been hooked up, so all workers were using the general contractor’s gasoline-powered generator to operate their tools. When outdoor workers left, the generator had been turned off and placed indoors to prevent theft. The carpet layers decided to use the generator to provide lights and run their seaming iron. It was a cold day. They apparently didn’t realize the risks and didn’t open any windows or doors for ventilation.

A neighbor noticed the carpet installers’ van at the house late in the evening and went over to investigate. The workers were found unconscious. The neighbor called emergency personnel to help, but it was too late for one man. He was dead at the scene of acute carbon monoxide poisoning.

The laborer and his partner should have ventilated their work area by opening windows and doors when using the gasoline-powered generator. Their employer should have provided them with training about hazardous conditions associated with such generators and other equipment.