Carbon Monoxide Safety Meeting Kit

WHAT’S AT STAKE

CARBON MONOXIDE (CO)

CO poisoning is the leading cause of poisoning deaths in the US. Carbon monoxide is an invisible, odorless, colorless gas created when fuels (such as gasoline, wood, coal, natural gas, propane, oil, and methane) burn incompletely.

Due to its difficult detection carbon monoxide is a serious concern in the workplace.

WHAT’ S THE DANGER

CO is a common industrial hazard resulting from the incomplete burning of material containing carbon such as natural gas, gasoline, kerosene, oil, propane, coal, or wood. Forges, blast furnaces and coke ovens produce CO, but one of the most common sources of exposure in the workplace is the internal combustion engine

EXPOSURE TO WORKERS

Running an internal combustion engine indoors or in confined areas will quickly fill a workplace with dangerous levels of the gas. Worksite locations where there are there are many possible sources of carbon monoxide, include:

- Gas-powered engines
- Fires
- Natural gas space heaters
- Furnaces
- Kilns
- Boilers

- A kitchen with a malfunctioning gas oven
- Gas-powered water heater in need of servicing
- An underground parking garage
- Air intake located on a loading dock
- A boiler room where ventilation is defective
- A laundry department with gas-fueled appliances that aren’t working properly

SYMPTOMS OF CO POISONING

To protect yourself at work and home, recognize the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning:

- Sleepiness
- Fatigue
- Pain or tightness across the chest
- Shortness of breath
- Dizziness
- Headache
- Nausea
- Weakness
- Confusion
- Blurred vision
- Loss of consciousness

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

RISK REDUCTION

To reduce the potential for injury or disease, control the risks and hazards in the workplace.

The most effective way to manage the risk of exposure to carbon monoxide is to eliminate the source of exposure. If that’s not possible, there are other risk controls to use.

Elimination or substitution

This involves eliminating the hazard by substituting a safer process or material, where possible. It is the most effective control.

Engineering controls

Making physical modifications to facilities, equipment and processes can reduce exposure.

Administrative controls

Changing work practices and work policies, awareness tools, and training can limit the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Personal protective equipment

This is the least effective control. When used, there must always be at least one other control in place as well.

WORKER RESPONSIBILITY TO HELP PREVENT CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

- 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 powered washers as well as heaters and forklifts, while working in enclosed spaces.

FINAL WORD

Whether you work in white collar enclosed office setting, an industrial setting, or as a public/private service provider, there is a risk of being exposed to the lethal effects of carbon monoxide.