Carbon Monoxide Stats and Facts

FACTS

1. People who are sleeping or who have been drinking alcohol can die from CO poisoning before ever having symptoms.

2. When too much carbon monoxide is in the air, your body replaces the oxygen in your red blood cells with carbon monoxide. This can lead to serious tissue damage, or even death.

3. Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless, tasteless gas produced by burning gasoline, wood, propane, charcoal or other fuel. Improperly ventilated appliances and engines, particularly in a tightly sealed or enclosed space, may allow carbon monoxide to accumulate to dangerous levels.

4. Smoke inhalation during a fire also can cause carbon monoxide poisoning.

5. Depending on the degree and length of exposure, carbon monoxide poisoning can cause:

- Permanent brain damage
- Damage to your heart, possibly leading to life-threatening cardiac complications
- Fetal death or miscarriage

STATS

- Every year, at least 430 people die in the U.S. from accidental CO poisoning.
- Of 136 people whose deaths were classified as “unintentional carbon monoxide poisoning, not fire related,” 49 (36%) most likely were asleep when poisoned.
- (49%) of 80 people whose deaths were identified as “residential fatalities” most likely were asleep vs 10 (18%) of 56 of those whose deaths were identified as occurring in

or around motor vehicles.

- 695 deaths (0.98% of all deaths) in New Mexico investigated by OMI were the result of CO poisoning (as identified by cause-of-death code C12). Of these deaths, 136 (19.6%) were coded as unintentional inhalation. Of the 136 decedents whose deaths were coded as unintentional inhalation, 36 (26%) were female and 100 (74%) were male. The median age was 39 years (range, <1-87 years).
- Although CO poisoning occurred throughout the year, 25 (45%) of the unintentional motor vehicle–related CO poisonings and 45 (56%) of the residential CO poisonings occurred during November, December, or January. The most common source of residential CO was unvented supplemental heaters, either natural gas or propane fueled, which accounted for 37 deaths (46%).