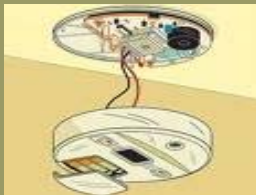


Carbon Monoxide (CO): the “Silent Killer”



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An estimated 300 people die each year as a result of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning and thousands of others end up in hospital emergency rooms. CO is a gas that is both odorless and colorless and hinders the blood's ability to deliver oxygen to parts of the body such as the brain, heart, and vital organs. Below is some information regarding sources of CO, its health effects and symptoms of exposure, and some things you can do to help keep you and your loved ones safe from CO poisoning.

Sources of Carbon Monoxide

CO is produced by the incomplete combustion of carbon-containing fuels. Examples of such fuels are:

- Fuel oil or gas burned by unvented space heaters.
- Wood, charcoal or natural gas burned by BBQs, woodstoves, and furnaces.
- Natural gas burned by gas stoves, fireplaces, and water heaters.
- Gasoline burned by vehicles with internal combustion engines.

Symptoms/Health Effects of Exposure

- CO poisoning can result in: headaches, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, chest pain, confusion, loss of consciousness, and even death.
- CO poisoning can be difficult to diagnose because the symptoms often mimic the flu or other illnesses. Sleeping or intoxicated individuals can die from CO poisoning before ever experiencing symptoms.
- Fetuses, infants, the elderly, and people with heart and respiratory illnesses are at particularly high risk for CO poisoning.

Tips on Preventing Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

- Install a battery-operated CO detector near sleeping areas in your home.
- Have your gas, oil, or coal burning appliances serviced frequently.
- Never use a charcoal grill or a BBQ indoors. All burning charcoal emits CO.
- Open flues when fireplaces are in use.
- Do not use ovens or gas ranges to heat your home.
- Do not use unvented gas or kerosene space heaters in enclosed spaces.
- Do not leave a car or lawn mower engine running in any enclosed space.

What to Do If You Suspect Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Don't ignore symptoms, especially if more than one person is feeling them. If you think you are suffering from carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning, you should: Get fresh air immediately, open doors and windows, turn off combustion appliances, and leave the house. Go to an emergency room. Be sure to tell the physician that you suspect CO poisoning.

Please contact EH&S at 213-740-6448 for more information.

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