

What Employers Need to Know about Carbon Monoxide



Carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning is dangerous but preventable.

- CO is a gas that can't be seen or smelled and is deadly.
- CO is created when we burn materials containing carbon, such as natural gas, propane, and wood.
- CO can build up very quickly if not vented properly. It is the most common cause of nondrug poisoning deaths.

Some workplaces and jobs put people at higher risk for CO poisoning.

Places such as boiler rooms, warehouses, and petroleum refineries pose a higher risk of CO poisoning. Other risks include working near docks, blast furnaces, or coke ovens.

Higher risk jobs include:

- Customs inspectors
- Forklift operators
- Welders
- Garage mechanics
- Public safety personnel
- Diesel engine operators

Know the symptoms of CO poisoning.

If you or your employees experience these symptoms, move to fresh air and call 911.



Headache



Fatigue



Dizziness



Nausea



Confusion



Shortness of
breath

Employers can take steps to prevent CO poisoning at work:

- **Install a carbon monoxide detector.** Talk to a building inspector about the best detector for your worksite and where to install it.
- **Install an effective ventilation system** to help remove CO from work areas.
- **Maintain equipment and appliances.** Ensure water and space heaters, cooking ranges, and other devices that produce CO are inspected each year and are in good working order.
- **Switch your gasoline-powered devices to a different power source.** If possible, consider powering devices by electricity, batteries, or compressed air.
- **Do not use gasoline-powered engines indoors or in other poorly ventilated areas.**
- **Consider providing employees with personal CO monitors with audible alarms if the potential for CO exposure exists.** In an emergency, correct personal protective equipment (PPE) will be needed and may include supplied air or self-contained breathing apparatus respirators. **Do not** use chemical cartridge or canister respirators. Learn more about PPE from your safety officer or by calling 1-800-CDC INFO.
- **Talk to your employees about CO poisoning.** Tell them about the potential sources and conditions that may lead to CO poisoning. Post signs in break areas about CO poisoning symptoms and train staff to recognize them. Train staff how to respond when the CO detector sounds or if they see symptoms of CO poisoning.

For more information about carbon monoxide poisoning, visit www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/air/co.htm.

