

Carbon Monoxide Fact Sheet

Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless, tasteless gas and is generated when organic material is heated or burned with a limited supply of oxygen.

Symptoms of Exposure: Carbon monoxide is toxic through inhalation and has no warning properties (smell, taste). Exposures to carbon monoxide above 1000 parts per million (PPM) can cause loss of consciousness and death. Typical symptoms at exposure levels above the OSHA PEL (50 PPM) may include headache, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, weakness, rapid breathing, mental confusion, and a cherry red coloration of the skin.

Treatment: The general treatment for CO poisoning is to remove the source of CO and provide fresh air to the affected person while keeping them at rest. Medical treatment may

include administration of enriched oxygen or treatment in a hyperbaric oxygen chamber. It is important that all CO poisoned persons receive a medical check-up and/or treatment following overexposure.

Prevention: Fossil fuel vehicles should be used in areas with adequate mechanical or natural ventilation. Properly adjusted combustion sources put out less carbon monoxide emissions. As a general rule, propane and diesel fueled vehicles exhaust far less CO than gasoline fueled vehicles. Carbon Monoxide monitoring is also recommended for high traffic and poorly ventilated areas, as well as confined spaces.

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