

CARBON MONOXIDE

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



GUIDELINES

SYMPTOMS OF EXPOSURE.

Carbon monoxide (CO) 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. All persons suspected of being overexposed to CO should have a medical checkup immediately following the exposure event.

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.