



SAFETY INCENTIVE PROGRAM
950 Keynote Circle, Suite 10
Cleveland, Ohio 44131-1802
Telephone (216) 398-9860

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SIP TIP: CARBON MONOXIDE: THE SILENT KILLER

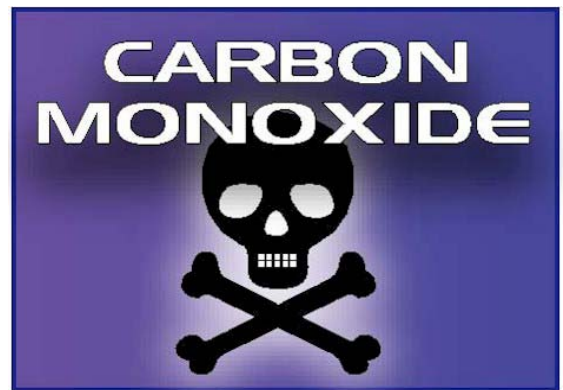
Your Project Site is Also a Potential Source of Carbon Monoxide

As fall approaches and the cooler weather prompts residents to fire up their furnaces, Underwriters Laboratories Inc. (UL), the not-for-profit product safety testing organization, is urging homeowners to purchase carbon monoxide (CO) alarms and replace the batteries in existing CO alarms.

What is CO? Called the silent killer, CO is an odorless, colorless, tasteless gas produced by incomplete burning of fuel, such as propane, kerosene, gasoline, oil, natural gas, wood and charcoal.

Why is CO Dangerous? When carbon monoxide is inhaled, it passes from the lungs into the hemoglobin molecules of red blood cells. Unfortunately, the hemoglobin likes CO more than oxygen. So your body forms carboxyhemoglobin. Carboxyhemoglobin blocks the oxygen transport to the blood. The result is that the body becomes oxygen-starved, which can result in tissue damage and death.

Where is CO Found? Sources of CO in homes can include malfunctioning gas-fired appliances, space heaters and chimney flues. Each year, more than 450 people die from accidental carbon monoxide poisoning, most of them (64 percent) inside homes, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).



CO is slightly lighter than air, and while it will normally rise, it can gather in low-lying areas when mixed with other gases and air contaminants.

Your project site is also subject to increased CO levels, especially if heavy equipment is operating within an enclosed building.

What are the Symptoms of Exposure? Symptoms of CO poisoning include nausea, fatigue, headaches, dizziness, breathing difficulty and confusion -- but they are general enough to be confused with the flu, according to Dr. Jerrold Leikin, director of Medical Toxicology for Evanston Northwestern Healthcare in Illinois.

What can be Done to Protect Yourself? Install CO alarms. They are designed to alert residents before carbon monoxide concentrations grow to toxic levels, often giving homeowners hours of advance notice. "A CO alarm should not be confused with a smoke alarm," said John Drengenberg, manager of Consumer Affairs for UL. "A smoke alarm tells you to get out immediately. A CO alarm warns of a potential poisoning risk, usually long before symptoms are apparent, which allows you time to get help. You need both life safety devices in your home." And in the winter months of temporary heat, full enclosure, and use of heavy equipment, they are also needed at the project site. If you are working near the ceiling level, take a calibrated gas meter or CO alarm with you to monitor for CO. The OSHA regulations allow a worker to be exposed to 50 parts per million (ppm) CO at any time during an 8-hour day (although most people use 35 ppm to be more safe).

For more information about CO alarms, smoke alarms and fire safety, go to <http://www.ul.com/consumers>.

REMINDER: WHAT YOU CAN'T SEE CAN KILL YOU!