CrewSigned

Carbon Monoxide Toolbox Talk

5-minute read-aloud · Last reviewed November 24, 2026

Carbon monoxide is a gas you cannot see, smell or taste, and it can kill you before you know anything is wrong. It comes from burning fuel: gasoline, diesel, propane, natural gas, kerosene, wood and charcoal. When we close up buildings for winter and bring heaters and gas tools inside, the risk goes way up.

Here is what it does. Carbon monoxide gets into your blood and pushes out the oxygen your body needs. The first signs are headache, dizziness, tiredness, nausea and feeling short of breath. As it builds up, you get confused, weak and sleepy, and then you pass out. Because it messes with your thinking, people often do not realize they are being poisoned. They think they are just tired or coming down with something.

On our jobs, the usual sources are generators, gas-powered concrete saws, pressure washers, compressors, floor buffers, propane forklifts, temporary heaters and running vehicles. Any of these in a garage, basement, tent, trailer, tank or closed-up room can build up deadly levels in minutes. Opening a door or a window is not enough.

The best fix is to keep engines outside. Put generators and compressors outdoors, well away from doors, windows and air intakes. NIOSH recommends at least twenty feet. Use electric or battery tools indoors when you can. If we must run fuel-burning equipment inside, we need fresh air blowing in, the exhaust carried out, and a carbon monoxide monitor running. Keep heaters maintained and vented the way the label says. Do not idle trucks in loading docks or garages.

Never sleep or sit in a running vehicle or a heated trailer with the windows closed, and make sure tailpipes are not blocked by snow.

If you or someone near you feels sick around running equipment, get everyone out into fresh air right away. Shut off the equipment if you can do it quickly and safely. Call 911 if anyone is confused, very sleepy or passes out. Do not go back in to rescue someone unless you have the right equipment, or you may become the second victim.

If a monitor alarms, believe it. Leave first and find the cause second.

Discussion questions

1. What gas or propane equipment are we running indoors or in enclosed areas this week?
2. Where would a generator go on this site so its exhaust stays away from doors, windows and vents?
3. If a coworker got a headache and felt dizzy near running equipment, what would you do first?

OSHA standard

29 CFR 1926.55, Gases, vapors, fumes, dusts and mists
https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1926/1926.55

SOURCES

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Fact Sheet (OSHA FS-3522): https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/carbonmonoxide-factsheet.pdf
NIOSH, Carbon Monoxide Hazards at Work: https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/carbon-monoxide/about/index.html

This talk does not replace training that an OSHA standard requires. Scripts are based on OSHA and NIOSH publications and rewritten in plain language.

Safety Meeting Sign-In Sheet

TOPIC

Carbon Monoxide Toolbox Talk

COMPANY

JOB / SITE

DATE

TIME

PRESENTER

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