



Unintentional Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Deaths

- Carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning occurs by inhalation of a high concentration of CO, usually within an enclosed or semi-enclosed space.
- Common sources of CO exposure include: car/truck exhaust, small gasoline engines, portable generators, charcoal and wood burning stoves, room heaters, and fuel burning appliances.
- General health symptoms for persons who are exposed to higher levels of CO may include: headache, dizziness, weakness, fainting, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, mental confusion, sleepiness, chest pain, and breathing difficulties.
- Because CO is a colorless, odorless, tasteless, non-irritating gas, many people do not realize they have been exposed until it is too late.

U.S.

- Each year, more than 500 Americans die from unintentional CO poisoning.
- Approximately 15,000 are treated in a hospital emergency department.

Oklahoma

- In Oklahoma between 1994 and 2003, 291 CO-related deaths occurred.
 - Slightly less than half of all unintentional exposures to CO resulting in death occurred from a source inside the home (47%).
- Vehicle exhaust was the second most common source of unintentional CO exposure (33%).
- Alcohol was involved in 31% of unintentional deaths.
- Unintentional deaths due to CO exposure were more likely to occur in the winter.
 - 33% of unintentional deaths occurred in December and January.
- The period of time between midnight and 4 a.m. accounted for the most deaths.

Prevention

Since all people and animals are at risk for CO poisoning, it is important for everyone to recognize the signs and symptoms. People who are sleeping or have been drinking alcohol can die from CO poisoning before ever noticing symptoms. If you suspect CO poisoning, call 911 or your local fire department and evacuate the premises immediately – get outside into fresh air.

Things you can do to prevent CO poisoning:

- Install a CO detector on the wall or ceiling in an area central to all bedrooms.
- Check and clean fireplace chimneys and flues at least once a year.
- Properly install, maintain, and operate all fuel-burning appliances.
- Use unvented fuel-burning space heaters only while someone is awake to monitor them, and open doors and windows in the room to provide fresh air.
- Have a qualified service technician inspect furnaces, water heaters, and gas dryers annually.
- Do not use a gas oven or stove to heat a home.
- Do not run a vehicle inside a garage attached to your house, even if you leave the garage door open.
 - Routinely inspect automobile exhaust systems for defects.
 - Routinely inspect automobile tailpipes for snow blockage during the winter months.
- Do not use a generator, lantern, camp stove, or charcoal in an enclosed area such as a tent, home, or garage or near an open window, door, or vent where exhaust can vent into an enclosed area.