



Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

What is Carbon Monoxide?

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colourless, odourless, and tasteless flammable gas that is slightly less dense than air.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning

Carbon monoxide can cause health problems before you even notice that it is present.

Breathing it in reduces your body's ability to carry oxygen in your blood.

A person can be poisoned by a small amount of CO over a longer period of time, or by a large amount of CO over a shorter amount of time.

At low levels, effects include flu-like symptoms, such as:

- ✚ tiredness
- ✚ headaches
- ✚ shortness of breath
- ✚ impaired motor functions like muscle weakness, partial or total loss of function of a body part (limb or limbs)

At high levels, or if you are exposed to low levels for long periods of time, you can experience:

- ✚ dizziness
- ✚ chest pain
- ✚ poor vision
- ✚ difficulty thinking

At very high levels, it can cause:

- ✚ convulsions
- ✚ coma
- ✚ death



Between 2000 and 2013, in Canada, there were 4,990 deaths associated to CO poisoning.

There are more than 300 CO-related deaths per year in Canada, and more than 200 hospitalizations per year in Canada.

Source: injuryresearch.bc.ca

CO poisoning is entirely preventable.

Carbon Monoxide Prevention



Carbon Monoxide alarms

Carbon monoxide (CO) can only be detected with a carbon monoxide alarm. You should have at least one CO alarm installed in your home, in addition to a smoke alarm. Smoke alarms alert you to fires, not carbon monoxide. There are also Smoke/Carbon Monoxide Alarm combo units.

Use special alarms for those who are hard of hearing or deaf – these alarms have strobe lights and bed shakers. The most important place to install a CO alarm is in hallways, outside of sleeping areas.

Test carbon monoxide alarms regularly

Test your CO alarms regularly, ideally once a month. Replace batteries and the alarm itself as recommended by the manufacturer. Carbon Monoxide detectors expire every five years, while smoke detectors expire every 10 years. If your detector is low on battery, you will likely hear short chirps each minute.

If your carbon monoxide alarm sounds:

Typically beeps four or five times in a row about every four seconds.

If your carbon monoxide alarm sounds, you should do the following:

- ✚ Do not try to locate the source of carbon monoxide.
- ✚ Leave your home immediately and move to fresh air.
- ✚ Once outside, call 9-1-1, your fire department or emergency services.
- ✚ Return to your home only after the problem has been fixed by a professional.

**Call Magnum Fire today to discuss
your CO detector needs.**

Source: Canada .ca, NFPA

A Close Call

In 17 years of property management, there was this one day, when the CO alarm went off in the laundry room in the basement. The Property Manager's office was right above. He went down into the laundry. There was no cause for the CO alarm to be going off. It was silenced, but no sooner he entered his office the same alarm went off again. The other location where there was a CO detector was the boiler room, also in the basement about 80 feet from the laundry, but there was silence - NO ALARM!

The Property Manager (PM) went down to the basement and noticed this time that the boiler room door was slightly ajar. On investigation, he found a contractor with half a dozen men performing welding with a portable generator in operation inside the room. The PM ordered the generator be shut off immediately. He asked why the CO alarm was not going off in the boiler and discovered that the welder foreman had disabled it!

What was shocking was that the 6 men did not know how close to death they were. Had they not left that boiler room door slightly ajar, they may all have gone into a permanent slumber.

Lay emphasis on safety, expect that unexpected things can happen. Therefore, keep your life safety devices functional, and in good stead. Trust them when they go off!

In an emergency, evacuate the area and have the Fire Department in by placing a call to 911.

All's well that ends well, but the moral of the story is..... know that CO is a silent killer!

Make sure you have your deficiencies rectified by your fire safety experts without leaving a "GAP" in your planned safety.

The Hawkins Gignac Act, passed by the Ontario legislature in 2013, made carbon monoxide alarms mandatory in all Ontario homes. - the National Post

The author of this true incident has 17 years of property management experience.



Lookout for next month's topic on Risk Management.

Enjoy your summer and do your part to stop the spread of COVID-19.