

# Carbon Monoxide Safety

**Editor's note:** Our Tailgate Training Tip Sheets are [available in Spanish at www.gemplers.com](http://www.gemplers.com).

## KEY POINTS:

- Carbon monoxide or CO is a colorless and odorless gas.
- Improperly tuned forklifts, pressure washers, and improperly installed heating devices are common sources of CO.
- Never enter a CO-laden building without proper respiratory protection.

**Note to trainer:** Follow this script or use it to help guide you through a 10- to 15-minute tailgate training session for your ag/hort workers. You may photocopy this sheet for your employees' personal use. However, it may not be published or sold.

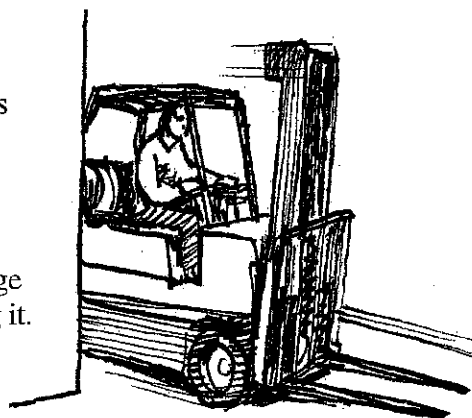
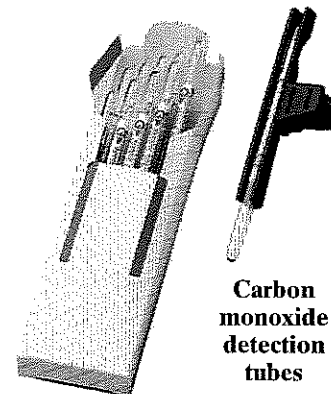
## What is carbon monoxide?

- Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless gas that can be fatal if inhaled.  
Some common sources of carbon monoxide include:
  - improperly maintained propane- or gasoline-powered forklifts
  - malfunctioning heaters
  - pressure washers used in animal confinement
  - tractors and other motor vehicles running indoors
  - the use of other gasoline-powered engines or tools indoors
- Carbon monoxide can build up to dangerous levels in cold storage buildings, shops, barns, or even your home without you knowing it.
- That's why it's extremely important to keep such equipment as forklifts properly tuned and to never run gasoline- or propane-powered equipment in poorly ventilated areas.

## Symptoms of CO poisoning

- You can become overcome by carbon monoxide without realizing it.
- Low levels of CO may result in headaches, fatigue, and possibly nausea.
- Among the symptoms that may indicate carbon monoxide poisoning are: severe headaches, dizziness, blurred vision, nausea, vomiting, confusion, disorientation, loss of muscle control, fatigue, sleepiness, rapid heartbeat or pulse, tightening of the chest, fainting, and loss of consciousness.

**WARNING:** If you think a co-worker may be showing signs of CO poisoning, call 911 or your other local emergency telephone number for help immediately. Also, know that a person affected by carbon monoxide may feel ill in a CO-laden building, but then feel fine after exiting the building. It's important to get a blood test as soon as possible to determine whether or not there was carbon monoxide poisoning.



The use of an improperly tuned gas- or propane-powered forklift indoors can result in high levels of CO.



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See our [full line of safety supplies](#), including respirators, eye and ear protection, coveralls, first aid and more.

## Carbon Monoxide Is Dangerous

### Carbon monoxide problems at home

- Dangerous levels of carbon monoxide can potentially build up in your home as well as at work.
- A common source of CO in homes is the use of inappropriate or improperly installed heating devices.
- These include: charcoal grills, gas barbecues, camp stoves, or other heating devices that don't specifically say they can be used indoors.
- Other indoor home appliances that may result in CO problems due to poor maintenance or broken parts include gas heaters, furnaces, gas stoves, and wood stoves.
- It's important to keep all home appliances well-maintained and to only use camp stoves, gas barbecues and similar devices outdoors.

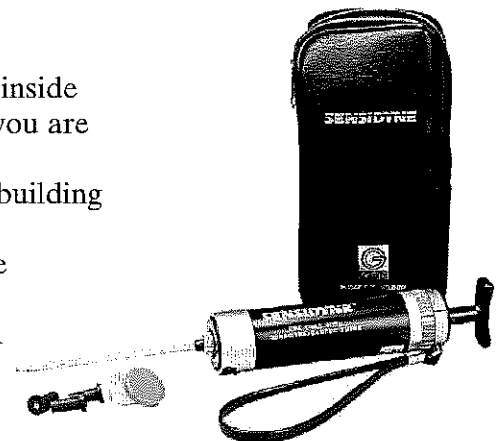
**WARNING:** *If someone is overcome by carbon monoxide poisoning, either at home or at work, do not go into the building and try to rescue the person yourself. You could become very ill as well. Instead, immediately call for professional emergency medical help.*



**Call for emergency medical help immediately if someone at home or work is overcome by carbon monoxide.**

### More carbon monoxide safety tips

1. Never enter a building with high levels of carbon monoxide without the appropriate respiratory protection, such as a self-contained breathing apparatus or SCBA respirator.
2. If you experience any symptoms of possible CO poisoning inside a building, then go outside and feel better, do not assume you are okay. Do not re-enter the building. Also, get a blood test.
3. Know that the only way you can tell how much CO is in a building is by checking the atmosphere with a CO detector.
4. Know that using such devices as gasoline-powered pressure washers indoors means you are risking your life.
5. If you must operate such equipment as a propane-powered forklift indoors, make sure the building is adequately ventilated and that the forklift has been properly tuned.



**A gas detection monitor is needed to detect the level of carbon monoxide in a building.**

### Are there any questions?

**Note to trainer:** *Take time to answer trainees' questions. Then review the Carbon Monoxide Do's and Don'ts.*

### CARBON MONOXIDE DO'S AND DON'TS

#### DO:

- Immediately leave the building and seek medical help if you suspect signs of carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Know that CO can strike quickly.
- Become familiar with the symptoms of CO poisoning.

#### DON'T:

- Enter a building with potentially high levels of carbon monoxide without respiratory protection.
- Run tractors or other motor vehicles indoors.
- Use charcoal grills or camp stoves indoors.

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