

Recommendation by OHSA on Carbon Monoxide poisoning

The Occupational Health and Safety Authority wishes to remind all employers of their obligations to provide a safe and healthy workplace for all their employees. Employers are also required to carry out a risk assessment of all work activities. The risk assessment should identify whether there is the possibility of Carbon Monoxide (CO) poisoning and if so, recommend control measures. These may include regular maintenance and inspection of equipment, awareness training for employees and suitable ventilation.

Carbon Monoxide (CO) is produced by the incomplete combustion of gaseous, solid or liquid fuels. Wherever there is an appliance incorporating the burning of a fuel, there is the potential for the generation of CO. The specific gravity of CO is very close to that of air. Thus CO would eventually fill the whole volume of an enclosed space unless adequate ventilation is available.

CO is highly poisonous, even at very low levels of concentration, it can cause brain damage or death. It is known as the "silent killer" because it is virtually undetectable to the human senses. You cannot see, taste or smell it.

The presence of CO may cause the following symptoms: fatigue, headaches, nausea, chest pains, sudden giddiness when standing up, sickness, diarrhea, stomach pains and erratic behavior.

If you suspect that an appliance or machine is producing CO, switch it off, open doors and windows to ventilate the room and seek medical help.

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