

# Carbon monoxide

List sources of CO on site.

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## Explain dangers

Carbon monoxide (chemical abbreviation: CO) is a clear, colourless gas you can't smell or taste.

It's dangerous because it interferes with your body's ability to use oxygen. Even in small doses, CO can kill you.

The first signs are headache and fatigue. More exposure can rapidly lead to loss of consciousness, arrested breathing, heart failure, and death.

A major source of CO is engine exhaust. Gasoline, propane, and diesel engines all release CO. Some types of welding may also produce it.

## Identify controls

Since CO has no taste or smell, you need a gas detector to see if it's present.

Some detectors are tubes that change colour when CO is in the air. These can be used only once. Others are continuous monitors with a cell designed to sense CO.

Whenever possible, operate engines outdoors. Welding machines and generators, for example, can be left outside—only the leads have to run into the building.

**Never work alone in an area where CO can accumulate.**



When engines must be operated indoors, take these precautions.

- Make sure the area is well ventilated. Keep doors and windows open. Use fans to bring in fresh air if necessary.
- Limit running time and don't let engines idle.
- Monitor CO levels regularly to make sure that ventilation is adequate.
- When necessary, use exhaust hoses or fans to draw engine exhaust out of the work area.
- Keep engines well tuned. They will run cleaner and produce less CO.
- When possible, use equipment that is electrically powered rather than gasoline, diesel, or propane powered.
- When other controls are inadequate, workers must wear respiratory protection. This means a supplied-air respirator (i.e., attached to an independent supply of clean air.)

## Demonstrate

Point out sources of CO on site.

Demonstrate how to use a CO detector.

Show your crew how to ventilate indoor areas.