

TOOLBOX TALK #9

DON'T BE OVERCOME BY CARBON MONOXIDE

Workers who operate equipment such as cutting saws, pumps and generators in buildings or semi-enclosed spaces are at risk for carbon monoxide poisoning – even in areas that appear well-ventilated. According to NIOSH, many people do not know that small gasoline-powered engines and tools produce high levels of CO. Because CO is colorless and odorless, workers can quickly be overcome. Opening doors and windows or using a fan does not guarantee safety.

NIOSH has tips for employers and workers who operate small gasoline-powered tools and machinery:

- Do not operate gasoline-powered engines or tools inside a building or in a partially enclosed area unless the engine is located outside and away from air intakes.
- Learn to recognize the symptoms and signs of CO overexposure: headaches, nausea, weakness, dizziness, verbal disturbances, changes in personality and loss of consciousness. Any of these symptoms can occur within minutes of exposure.
- If you experience any symptoms, immediately turn off any equipment and get to fresh air.
- Consider using tools powered by electricity or compressed air if they are available and can be used safely. If compressed air is used, place the gasoline-powered compressor outside away from air intakes.
- Use personal CO monitors when potential sources of CO exist. These monitors should be equipped with audible alarms to warn workers when CO concentrations are too high.

