



SAFETY TIP OF THE WEEK

FOR THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY



Company _____ Date _____

To encourage all of us to promote safety on a continuing basis, the Builders Exchange publishes a safety tip in each issue of the weekly **Bulletin**. The superintendent/foreman of each job should use this safety tip in a short safety meeting Monday morning. We suggest that this 5-to-10 minute meeting be just before lunch or perhaps right after the morning break. You can then emphasize the SAFETY TIP OF THE WEEK all week long.

Preventing Carbon Monoxide Exposure on the Construction Site

Week Ending 09/13/19

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a silent killer, making it one of the most dangerous threats on the construction site. CO is odorless, meaning that whether it's present on its own or among other "regular" gases and smells, it's utterly undetectable.

Within minutes of inhaling carbon monoxide, you can become unconscious and suffocate. Construction workers and welders are especially at risk. There is an increased risk of CO exposure in boiler rooms, warehouses, petroleum refineries, and steel production plants.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is constantly stressing the importance of appropriate prevention methods against CO poisoning, since it can threaten the lives of countless workers on a construction site without any notice.

Construction workers should take the following precautions and make note of these potential CO hazards.

Beware of Portable Generators

Especially on projects where the electrical wiring has not yet been done, portable generators are a necessity. However, they can also pose a serious concern. This ultimately comes down to poor ventilation.

The same goes for space heaters, gas-powered equipment (such as wet saws), and water pumps. To prevent CO poisoning from gas-powered equipment and generators, workers should:

- Never use these in enclosed spaces, such as basements, or areas where there is little to no ventilation. Windows and doors should always be left open when using these materials.
- Leave 3-4 feet of space between the generator and any ceilings or walls.
- If using a generator outdoors, make sure it's not placed in a location where CO could enter confined and occupied spaces, such as near narrow openings.

Be Properly Equipped

Construction managers should always ensure the installation of effective ventilation systems on the construction site. For this reason, quality assurance is absolutely essential. Industrial-sized fans should

be placed in areas where openings to the outdoors aren't as readily available.

Furthermore, gas-powered equipment should be swapped out for battery or electric powered equipment. Gas-powered saws (used for carving out openings in walls or other surfaces) should be replaced by hydraulic or pneumatic concrete saws.

Construction workers should also be equipped with the appropriate safety gear. Self-contained breathing apparatuses provide workers with clean air to breath via a fixed oxygen supply, making them immune to high concentrations of CO in their environment.

Workers should also be equipped with multi-gas monitors. These small monitors clip onto work belts and are highly portable. They detect poisonous gases in the environment and alert workers to their presence.

Know How to Respond

Construction employees should be trained to deal with instances of carbon monoxide poisoning. If workers notice themselves getting light-headed while working amongst these kinds of tools, they should immediately relocate to a well-ventilated area.

Similarly, they should learn to spot the signs of CO poisoning in fellow workers. These include lightheadedness, dizziness, vomiting, or shortness of breath. If they hear these complaints from fellow workers or notice them becoming lethargic, they should call 911 right away.

Additionally, they should move that individual to a ventilated area and apply a tight-fitting mask to reinstate their oxygen supply. If they have knowledge of CPR, it should be administered.

Construction workers are privy to the many deadly hazards around them, from steep grades to heavy machinery. However, carbon monoxide is perhaps the most dangerous because it is the most discrete. In addition to training for more visible hazards, such as the Fatal Four, workers should be familiar with OSHA's standards and solutions for carbon monoxide poisoning.

Special Topics for this Job: _____

MSDS # _____ **Reviewed – Title:** _____

Present at Meeting:

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Supervisor's Signature: _____

Note: These SAFETY TIPS OF THE WEEK are to help members provide a safe workplace and to instruct employees in ways to prevent accidents. Ensure you record the names of those who attend your safety meetings, and file this form with your permanent accident prevention records.