

EXPERT TIP #3

CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING IN ENCLOSED AND SEMI-ENCLOSED WORKSITES

THE INCIDENT

A worker at a large, enclosed construction site died of carbon monoxide poisoning after he and six other workers were exposed to high levels of the gas. Ventilation on the site was inadequate, and three machines were giving off carbon monoxide: a portable mixer and a trowel, both powered by gasoline, and a forklift powered by propane.

DESCRIPTION AND HEALTH EFFECTS:

Carbon monoxide is often called "the silent killer", because it gives no clear warning to its victims. It is an invisible gas with no taste or smell and it will not cause any unusual feeling in the nose, mouth or throat as it is breathed in. The first effects that can actually be noticed are headache and faintness. A worker who does not know about carbon monoxide poisoning may ignore these early symptoms or think a minor illness is coming on. But continuing exposure can cause confusion, loss of consciousness, and even death.

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