

★ Emergency Preparedness ★

Carbon Monoxide



Don't Be Scared ★ Be Prepared

# ★ What is Carbon Monoxide (CO)?

- » CO is a colorless gas that doesn't smell.
- » It can make you tired, headachy, dizzy, nauseous, confused, and/or disoriented. If you have heart disease, CO can increase your chest pain. **Get medical attention if you have any of the symptoms above.**
- » CO can affect your ability to drive safely.
- » **At very high levels, exposure to CO will cause loss of consciousness and death.**



# ★ Carbon Monoxide and Breathing

High levels of CO gas interrupt our ability to get oxygen from the air we breathe. CO gas replaces some of the oxygen in our blood and is slow to be released. It may take 24 hours for all excess CO gas to leave our bodies once we resume breathing fresh air. **But why is CO in your vehicle?** CO gas is created when fuel doesn't burn completely. Your car was designed to remove CO gas from exhaust fumes, but certain conditions will cause too much CO in/around your vehicle.

# ★ What should we look for?

- » A tailpipe blocked by snow, debris, tarps, etc.
- » An open tailgate/trunk sucks CO into the car.
- » Holes in your vehicle's body.
- » An exhaust system with holes in it.
- » It might be a rough-running engine, which could fail to completely burn the gasoline. That could cause more CO to be released into the air. *A smooth-running vehicle won't do that.* **Be safe and have the problem fixed.**

# More Ways CO Gets into Your Vehicle

- » Warming up your vehicle in an enclosed space (even with the garage door open). Excess buildup can make you sick.
- » Following another vehicle that has a faulty exhaust system.
- » Parking near running engines.

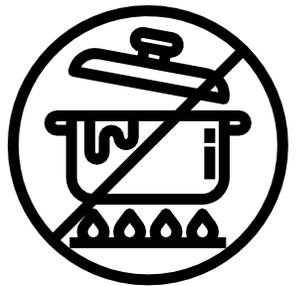
**Do you have a pickup truck with cap, topper, or camper shell?** Don't allow people to ride under a topper on a pickup truck. Passengers aren't protected from exhaust fumes that can be drawn up under the topper.

# ★ Using Your Vehicle to Stay Warm

Be aware that repeatedly turning your engine **ON** and **OFF** to stay warm in your vehicle produces higher levels of CO than leaving the motor on. Limit your exposure to exhaust fumes.

## What about cooking in your vehicle?

Another CO danger is using a fuel source inside your car to cook. Passenger vehicles aren't designed with sufficient ventilation for that. **Please do not cook in your car. It creates deadly levels of CO gas!**



# ★ Smoking in Your Vehicle

Cigarettes release CO! Opening a window won't help.

An open window could attract CO from your own vehicle's exhaust and those driving near you. **If you drop a cigarette in your car** but you're also feeling dizzy and confused due to CO fumes, you might not be able to find the cigarette before it starts a fire. **Get out of the car and reach into the car from outside** to avoid being overcome by CO fumes or caught in a sudden car fire.



# ★ If You Suspect CO Poisoning

If you suspect you have CO poisoning while in your vehicle, pull over, turn off the vehicle, and get into fresh air. **Seek medical attention.** Once you've recovered, get your vehicle to a mechanic for an exhaust system inspection. You can buy a CO test kit for about \$45.00. Few of us are aware of how much CO gas we breathe in our daily lives. Consider using CO test strips to sample air in your daily activities to look for ways to create or improve habits that protect you and others from breathing toxic levels of this colorless, odorless gas.

# Keep Fresh Air in Your Lungs

CO poisoning will hopefully never happen to you, but you can feel secure that you now know what signs to look for, and what you need to do if you or any passengers have symptoms.

**Don't be scared. Be prepared.**

## Acknowledgements

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Slides: Keith Proctor | Art: Pollution by Aficons and cooking by monkik are available at [theunounproject.com](http://theunounproject.com).

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