



# BSA SAFETY MOMENT

## CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING—AT HOME OR CAMP

### SUMMARY

Carbon monoxide (CO) causes upward of 400 deaths and results in the hospitalization of more than 4,000 people each year in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Many of those falling ill don't know they have CO poisoning because it is a colorless, odorless, and tasteless gas. With proper inspection and housekeeping, Scouts and community members alike can prevent CO poisoning.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

#### Causes of CO Release and Exposure

CO is a byproduct of many of your day-to-day activities. It is found in the fumes from gas stoves and lanterns, fireplaces, and the burning of charcoal, as well as from motor vehicles such as cars and boats. Additionally, CO poisoning most often occurs when the fumes are released within the confines of a small or closed-off room.

#### Sources of CO

- Car left running
- Portable generators
- Portable kerosene or gas heaters/lanterns
- Loose or broken ventilation pipes
- Improperly installed kitchen range or vent
- Operating a grill indoors or in garage
- Gas or wood-burning fireplace

#### (Possible) Symptoms of Poisoning

- Headache
- Weakness
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Confusion
- Disorientation
- Sleepiness

#### In More Severe Cases

- Fluid in the lungs (pulmonary edema)
- Neurological disorders

### Prevention and What to Do in an Emergency

- Make sure you have a properly installed CO detector in your home.
- Do not use flames or flame-producing equipment within a closed environment such as a small room, building, or tent.
- Check the seals of containers with flammable contents to ensure proper storage and prevent leakage.
- Do not burn fuels such as charcoal, propane, or other gases indoors.
- Always swim away from the engine side of any floating motor vehicle.
- Be sure to keep your vehicle inspections up to date.

If you suspect you are suffering from CO poisoning, immediately open any doors and windows to get fresh air, and contact your health-care facility or call 911.

### RESOURCES

- *Guide to Safe Scouting*—Chemical Fuels and Equipment: [www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/gss06/](http://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/gss06/)
- Environmental Protection Agency—Carbon Monoxide Poisoning: <https://cfpub.epa.gov/ncea/risk/recordisplay.cfm?deid=65703>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—Carbon Monoxide Poisoning FAQ: [www.cdc.gov/co/faqs.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/co/faqs.htm)
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services—A Healthy Home Checklist: <https://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/calls/checklist.pdf>