TOOLBOX TALK AWARENESS PACKAGES

HAZ-COX · Carbon Monoxide Awareness

Product Overview

Audience: Workers and supervisors who use or work near engines, generators, gas appliances, forklifts or hot work, indoors or in enclosed spaces · Duration: 20–30 minutes

Version 1.0 · 22 November 2026

For anyone who works with or near engines, generators, gas appliances and forklifts: where carbon monoxide comes from, why you cannot see or smell it, the signs of poisoning, the controls, and getting everyone to fresh air.

Carbon monoxide is a gas with no smell, no colour and no taste. It is made whenever fuel burns: petrol and diesel engines, generators, gas heaters and appliances, gas forklifts, petrol pressure washers and saws, cutting and welding, and fires. Indoors or in an enclosed space it can build up in minutes, and the first signs, a headache, dizziness and nausea, are easy to mistake for a cold or a hangover. It can cause confusion, collapse and death.

This talk covers the sources of carbon monoxide at work, why it is so dangerous, the signs of poisoning, the controls that keep it out of the air people breathe, and what to do when someone is affected: get everyone to fresh air, call the emergency number, do not go back in, and give first aid. It is awareness, not confined space entry or gas testing training.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the session participants will be able to:

- Name the common sources of carbon monoxide at work, from petrol engines and generators to gas heaters, forklifts and hot work
- Explain why carbon monoxide is so dangerous: no smell, no colour, and signs that are easy to miss
- Recognise the signs of carbon monoxide poisoning: headache, dizziness, nausea, tiredness, confusion and collapse
- Explain why fuel-powered equipment is never used indoors or in enclosed spaces, and the controls that replace it
- Know what a carbon monoxide alarm or gas monitor is telling you, and act on it
- Respond to suspected poisoning: get everyone to fresh air, call the emergency number, do not go back in, and give first aid

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What it covers

Module	Covers
Why it matters	Where carbon monoxide comes from; Why you cannot tell it is there; The signs of poisoning
Controls that work	No fuel-powered equipment indoors; Electric alternatives and ventilation; Maintenance, alarms and monitoring
Your part	Act on an alarm; Get everyone to fresh air; Report it

Activities

- Where is the carbon monoxide: workers find the sources in four jobs, from a generator in a garage to a gas heater in a site shed, and decide on a safer way
- What would you do: workers decide what to do in four situations, from a crew with headaches to a gas monitor that alarms

What is in the package

Item	File
Editable PowerPoint presentation with speaker notes, plus PDF	02_TRAINING_PRESENTATION/Training Presentation.pptx and .pdf
Facilitator guide with a running sheet, discussion prompts and model answers	03_FACILITATOR_GUIDE/Facilitator Guide.docx and .pdf
Participant handout with the key points to take away	04_PARTICIPANT_HANDOUT/Participant Handout.docx and .pdf
Attendance record form, to capture who attended, when, and who facilitated	06_RECORDS/Attendance Record.docx and .pdf
Excel attendance register	06_RECORDS/Attendance Register.xlsx
Multiple-choice theory assessment, to record understanding if your business wants to	05_ASSESSMENT/Theory Assessment.docx and .pdf
Answer key for the assessment	05_ASSESSMENT/Assessment Answer Key.docx and .pdf
Certificate template	06_RECORDS/Certificate Template.docx
Start here: Read Me First, Product Overview, Permitted Use Terms, Version Information	01_START_HERE/ (four PDFs)

What you need to deliver it

- A facilitator such as a supervisor, leading hand or WHS adviser who has read the facilitator guide and knows your site's arrangements for the topic
- A screen or projector, or printed slides or handouts: it works in a crib room, site office or on a video call
- Your own site procedures for the topic, to point to during the session

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Questions

Does it cover confined spaces and gas testing? Only as what the talk is not. Carbon monoxide is one of the reasons confined spaces are dangerous, but entering a confined space and testing its atmosphere need their own training, permits and equipment. The talk tells workers never to enter a space where carbon monoxide may be present unless they are trained, authorised and the air has been tested.

Can we add our own site procedures and photos? Yes. The slides, handout and guide are editable, and the facilitator guide marks the places to add your own procedures, contacts and photos of your workplace.

Do we have to use the assessment? No. It is there if your business wants a record that each worker understood the key points. The attendance record on its own shows who attended and when.

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TOOLBOX TALK

Carbon Monoxide Awareness

The gas you cannot see or smell: where it comes from and how to stay safe

20–30 minutes · Workers and supervisors who use or work near engines, generators, gas appliances, forklifts or hot work, indoors or in enclosed spaces

[Company name] · [Date] · [Facilitator name]

COX

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What this talk is, and is not

This talk covers

- ✓ Where carbon monoxide comes from
- ✓ The signs of poisoning
- ✓ The controls that keep it out
- ✓ What to do when someone is affected

This talk is not

- ✗ Confined space entry training
- ✗ Gas detector training
- ✗ Gas appliance work
- ✗ Our procedure: **[Our plant procedure]**

Awareness only. Confined space entry, gas testing and gas appliance work need specific training and, for some work, a licence.

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Where carbon monoxide comes from

Whenever fuel burns, it makes carbon monoxide.

- Petrol and diesel engines, generators, pumps and saws
- Gas heaters, ovens and appliances, and gas forklifts
- Petrol pressure washers and floor machines
- Cutting and welding in enclosed spaces
- Fires, smouldering material and blocked flues

A composite example

- A crew runs a petrol pressure washer in a closed workshop on a cold day, with the roller door half open.
- Within the hour two workers have headaches. One feels faint and sits down. Nobody connects it to the washer.

An open door is not ventilation.

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Duties under health and safety laws

The business must

- Keep the air safe to breathe
- Keep fuel-burning equipment out of enclosed spaces
- Maintain plant and appliances
- Monitor the air where it is needed

You must

- Never run engines indoors
- Follow the procedure and the controls
- Act on alarms and the signs
- Report fumes, faults and near misses

Most health and safety laws give these duties. Check the law where you work (in Australia, WHS or OHS laws).

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The order of controls for carbon monoxide

1. **Elimination** — No fuel-burning equipment indoors or in enclosed spaces
2. **Substitution** — Electric or battery tools, washers, heaters and forklifts
3. **Isolation** — Generators and engines outside, exhaust away from openings
4. **Engineering** — Mechanical ventilation, flues, CO alarms and fixed gas detection
5. **Administrative** — Maintenance, procedures, personal monitors, training
6. **PPE** — Supplied air for specialist work; ordinary masks do not filter CO

HIGHER ORDER

Higher order controls remove or control the hazard at the source, or put a barrier between people and the hazard.

LOWER ORDER

Lower order controls rely on people to do a thing or wear a thing, every time, tired, distracted or rushed.

Behaviours are not on the hierarchy, but behaviours and culture decide whether every control on it actually works.

An ordinary dust mask does nothing against carbon monoxide.

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Carbon Monoxide Awareness

Participant handout · keep this

Carbon monoxide has no smell and no colour. Keep it out of the air you breathe. Keep this page.

The order of controls

1. No fuel-burning equipment indoors
2. Electric or battery equipment instead
3. Engines outside, exhaust away from openings
4. Ventilation, flues, alarms and detection
5. Maintenance, procedures and monitors
6. Masks do not filter carbon monoxide

The signs

- Headache, dizziness, nausea, tiredness
- Confusion, blurred vision, collapse

Never

- Run an engine or generator indoors
- Go in after a collapsed worker

Before you start

- ☐ Is anything burning fuel inside or in an enclosed space?
- ☐ Is there an electric option for this job?
- ☐ Is the exhaust going outside, away from doors, windows and vents?
- ☐ Is the equipment maintained, and the gas monitor working?
- ☐ Does anyone have a headache, dizziness or nausea?

Alarm or signs

- Everyone to fresh air; call your local emergency number (000 in Australia) if unwell
- Do not go back in until it is checked

Who and where

- **[Gas monitor arrangements]**
- **[Who to report to here]**

No fuel-powered equipment indoors. Feel unwell? Get to fresh air.

This is awareness training. It is not a licence, a ticket, a permit or a competency. It is not confined space entry, gas testing or first aid training.

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