

# Safety Saves

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**One of our members** recently had a very close call with a hazard that we all have the potential of being exposed to at home, work and on vacation.

This scenario started like a typical first night back in logging camp: you get to camp late in the evening and go to bed; however, little did this individual know when he crawled into bed that night that it came close to being his last.

When the alarm went off in the morning—he has no memory of it—but he had shut it off as well as the onboard generator for the camper that was keeping it warm. Some time later he managed to make a call on the radio and because he was not making any sense, his father came to check on him and see what was going on.

After checking everything out, they decided that his sickness must have been caused from the exhaust of the onboard generator in the camper. After some fresh air, he started regaining his senses and—besides having a severe headache—he seemed okay. They had checked his pulse and it was right where it should be. Hours later, still feeling very poorly, he checked his pulse rate again and it was ranging between 100-120 beats per minute at rest. They made the right decision and headed for the emergency room.

After hours of Oxygen treatment he was released and, aside from a knot on his head from a fall (most likely going unconscious), he was fine. If you haven't guessed by now, he had Carbon monoxide (sometimes referred to as CO) poisoning.

CO is a colorless, odorless gas produced by burning material containing carbon (most organic compounds). Carbon monoxide poisoning can cause brain damage and death. You can't see it, smell it, or taste it... but carbon monoxide is deadly!

Carbon monoxide is the leading cause of accidental poisoning deaths in America. According to the Centers for Disease Control, CO claims nearly 500 lives per year and causes 15,000 emergency room visits. Common sources of CO are motor vehicle exhaust, smoke from fires, engine fumes and non-electric heaters.

Carbon monoxide is produced by common household appliances as well, like Gas water heaters, Propane heaters and stoves, charcoal grills, etc.

Exposure to carbon monoxide is most commonly accompanied by the following symptoms: headache, dizziness, nausea, flu-like symptoms, fatigue, shortness of breath on exertion, impaired judgment, chest pain, confusion, depression, hallucinations, agitation, vomiting, fainting and seizure.

Carbon Monoxide saturates your blood cells and limits their ability to carry oxygen. Once you get CO poisoning, just getting to fresh air won't do it. The treatment for carbon monoxide poisoning is high-dose oxygen, usually using a facemask. Carbon monoxide levels in the blood are periodically checked until they are low enough to safely send you home. In severe poisoning, if available, a hyperbaric pressure chamber may be used to give even higher doses of oxygen. The pure oxygen will force the CO out of your blood cells and end the CO poisoning in your system.

What about CO detectors? This was a nearly new camper, had everything including CO detectors, but apparently they were not working properly. They still aren't sure exactly how the CO was getting in the camper as the exhaust for the onboard generator seemed to be in good condition... the last I talked with him, the camper was back at the dealership getting checked out.

Another thing he did was spend \$30 a piece on some good CO detectors. After doing some research, his advice is to look for the detectors that have the digital CO level monitors on them and can also be programmed to go off at various CO levels.

In this case, our fellow logger is okay... but this is something that we can all learn from; watch for and make sure it doesn't happen to you, your family, or your coworkers.

Let's make sure everyone gets home safe every day... *Safety Saves*