



CARBON MONOXIDE (CO) EXPOSURE: IDLING OF VEHICLES

SITUATION

BCEHS vehicles left idling at emergency department entrances while off-loading patients or awaiting patients for transfer may pose a health risk to those exposed to exhaust fumes. While fuel powered vehicles idle, there is incomplete burning of the hydrocarbons found in gasoline and/or diesel that create carbon monoxide (CO). Exposure to CO is hazardous to an individual's health. Multiple vehicles left idling during heat waves, for example, to keep vehicle air conditioning operating, exacerbate this risk. BCEHS provides CO monitors to alert paramedics to the presence of CO.

KEY RISKS INCLUDE

- Exposure to vehicle exhaust including carbon monoxide (CO)
- Exposure risk to BCEHS staff, patients, hospital staff and visitors from carbon monoxide exhaust particulates
- Exposure to CO may lead to CO poisoning and other health effects depending on the level of exposure

ACTION TO BE TAKEN

- Minimize or eliminate idling while the vehicle is stationary especially in contained areas like emergency departments
- Park in open areas that will ensure good air circulation and exhaust dispersion, especially if you need to leave the vehicle running
- Obey signage that identify "no idling" zones
- If the alarm on a CO monitor activates, follow response protocols and contact BCEHS dispatch and an on-duty paramedic specialist for further direction
- Following an exposure, report the exposure to your supervisor and the Provincial Workplace Health Contact Centre at 1-866-922-9464

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND INFORMATION

- [General Vehicle Operation - Vehicles - 8.3.2](#)
- [Carbon Monoxide Education](#)