

SafetySpotlight SafetySpotlight SafetySpotlight newsletter

LEAD-BASED MATERIALS

Handle with care

Did your mother ever shoo you away from the windowsill as a child because she worried you could get lead poisoning? Though your mother had a right to be concerned at home, if you work with lead-based paint or other materials containing lead, you are at risk, too. These materials create dust and fumes that can be inhaled or land on your clothing, hair and body. As lead builds up in the body, it can cause significant damage to the kidneys, nervous system, intestines, lungs and reproductive system.

To combat these hazards, remember these safety tips when working with lead-based materials:

- Do not smoke, eat, drink or apply cosmetics in lead contaminated areas or while wearing contaminated apparel, and always wear a respirator.
- Never wear contaminated clothing home from work, as you could expose others to lead hazards, too.
- Clean lead dust spills by wetting the area with water and then vacuuming with a HEPA-filtered vacuum; never dry sweep.



CARBON MONOXIDE

A silent killer

Carbon monoxide, or CO, is a colorless, odorless, toxic gas that can strike without warning. Though it is non-irritating, exposure to CO can be deadly. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 400 people die and several thousand seek treatment for CO poisoning each year.

CO is produced when gas furnaces, ranges and water heaters are not installed properly, which allow high levels to escape into the air. Individuals who work with gasoline-powered tools and generators may also be exposed to dangerous levels of CO.

While using this type of equipment at work:

- Use machines outdoors only
- Opt for tools powered by electricity or compressed air instead of gas, when possible
- Make sure there is three to four feet of clear space on all sides of the machine you are using

In addition to these precautions, you should also be aware of the symptoms of CO poisoning, which are similar to the flu or food poisoning.

Did You Know?

- Lead exposure can harm babies before they are even born.
- Lead-based paint in good condition is generally not harmful.