Carbon Monoxide Safety Bulletin
for Firefighters

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning can include headache, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, weakness, confusion, chest pain, shortness of breath, and difficulty breathing. Severe carbon monoxide poisoning may cause loss of consciousness, long-term adverse neurological symptoms, and possibly even death.

Safety Reminders:

- All responders should wear personal protective equipment when entering a potentially hazardous atmosphere, including appropriate respiratory protection.
- All responders potentially exposed to carbon monoxide who have symptoms should receive medical evaluation.
- Access to and use of a carbon monoxide monitor may be a key factor in recognizing exposure hazards before becoming incapacitated or overcome.

Recent Carbon Monoxide Incidents in North Carolina:

- Two farm employees were overcome by carbon monoxide while using a propane powered forklift inside a trailer with no ventilation. One employee died, the other was seriously injured, and 16 responders (including eight firefighters) were exposed to carbon monoxide and taken to the hospital for treatment.
- Sixteen restaurant employees experienced carbon monoxide poisoning due to a problem with the HVAC system in the restaurant’s kitchen.

For more information on carbon monoxide, visit http://epi.publichealth.nc.gov/oee/a_z/co or contact the Occupational and Environmental Epidemiology Branch at (919) 707-5900.