



Boating and Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Michigan is the Great Lakes State! There are many opportunities for fun on the water including fishing, boating and water sports. Sometimes, those activities carry the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

What is carbon monoxide?

Carbon monoxide, or CO, is a gas that is formed when fuel is burned. CO in boat and generator exhaust can be found on deck, in the cabin, and on surrounding water - sometimes causing illness or even death. You cannot taste, smell, or see CO which is why it is known as the "silent killer".

What can you do to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning?

- ***Know the symptoms of CO poisoning.***

Mild symptoms include headache, weakness, dizziness, confusion, and nausea. Severe symptoms include loss of muscle control, blurred vision, extreme headache, fainting, and convulsions. These symptoms can lead to death.

Don't assume "sea sickness" is the cause of the symptoms, especially when more than one person is not feeling well. If you suspect CO poisoning, move to fresh air and get medical help right away!

- ***Install a CO detector on your boat.***

Install a CO detector approved for marine use. Test the detector on a regular basis to be sure it's working.

- ***Stay safe while playing in the water.***

Stay away from the exhaust outlets while the boat is running. Swimmers can be harmed by CO that is at the back of the boat or has built up on the water.

Don't sit on, swim under, or surf from the swim platform while the boat is running. Dangerous levels of CO can be found near the swim platform.



- ***Check the exhaust from the engine and the generator.***

Check to be sure water flows from the exhaust outlet when the engine or generator is running.

Check your engine's exhaust hoses for burns, cracks, or deterioration. Look for leaks in the exhaust system. Signs of leakage include rust and/or black streaks, water leaks, and corroded or cracked fittings. Be sure all of the exhaust clamps are in place and secure.



Be aware of changes in the exhaust's sound. This can indicate a problem with the boat's exhaust system.

If you have a generator on board, install and maintain a CO detector in the cabin. Be sure there are no leaks in the generator's exhaust and that the exhaust flows away from the boat and not into the cabin.

Never block exhaust outlets! Be sure that canopies or other equipment are not blocking the engine's or generator's exhaust and sending it back into the boat.

- ***Avoid idling the engine while the boat is stationary or while rafted to another boat.***

Exhaust from idling boats can seep into other boats and onto the water surrounding the boats.



If you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning,
move to fresh air and get medical help immediately!
DO NOT ignore symptoms. You could die within minutes if you do nothing.

All carbon monoxide poisonings are preventable!

For more information:

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services,

1-800-648-6942

www.michigan.gov/carbonmonoxide

Boat U.S. Foundation

www.boatus.org/carbon-monoxide/checklist

U.S. Coast Guard

www.uscgboating.org/recreational-boaters/carbon-monoxide-protect.php