

Hazard Alert – Propane-powered Floor Burnishers

Hazard Summary

Carbon Monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless and tasteless gas that is generated by gasoline and propane powered engines. CO interferes with the ability of red blood cells to carry oxygen. Exposure to CO can cause non-specific symptoms such as severe headaches, nausea, vomiting, dizziness and drowsiness, and severe exposure can result in permanent brain and heart damage or death. Propane- powered burnishers can emit CO levels well in excess of acceptable limits and CO can rapidly accumulate in a workplace without adequate controls.

Recommended Precautions

If possible, propane-powered burnishers should be replaced with electric or battery powered models. The following must be considered if propane burnishers are used:

Maintenance

- Ensure that burnishers are regularly maintained. Engine tuning should be included in routine maintenance and adjustments to the fuel system and carburetion of a propane engine must be done according to manufacturers instructions.
- Emission controlling systems should be used on burnishers (e.g. catalytic mufflers).
- A log sheet should be attached to each burnisher for the operator to complete every time it is used and there must be a written record between the operator of the burnisher and the technician performing the servicing.
- Ensure that a checklist is available for the operator to complete prior to each use of the burnisher.
- Ensure that maintenance records are maintained for the previous five years.

Education

- Ensure that workers are made aware of the dangers of CO poisoning.
- Ensure that operators are appropriately trained on safe operation of burnishers and keep their certificate(s) of training with them while at work.
- Ensure that workers are trained on reading monitoring devices and what to do when alarms are activated.

Monitoring

- Assess adequacy of mechanical ventilation in areas where burnishers are used.
- Ensure that regular exhaust emission testing for CO is done. Work orders must include emission testing of burnishers.

