

THE SILENT KILLER – CARBON MONOXIDE

Passengers of nearly any boat with a motor on board can be victims of carbon monoxide poisoning. Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless, tasteless gas that can be toxic even in very small quantities.

Carbon monoxide's effects are cumulative over time and there have been injuries and deaths caused by the infiltration of this poisonous gas into boats' living and sleeping spaces, and also on the stern deck and swim platform area.



Common signs of carbon monoxide poisoning include irritated eyes, headache, nausea, weakness and dizziness. These symptoms can often be misdiagnosed as seasickness or intoxication!

A newly recognized phenomenon has been discovered where a swimmer died when they ventured too closely to a houseboat's swim platform while engines or generators were running or have been overcome while being towed or dragged too near the stern of a boat. The U.S. Coast Guard has issued the warning that if your boat "has a swim platform and its electrical generator vents through the transom into a stern cavity, do not run your generator when not underway if someone is swimming in the area near the stern or sitting on the stern deck or swim platform."

To help avoid the dangers of carbon monoxide on your watercraft:

- ★ Keep air flowing throughout the boat whenever any gas or diesel engine, generator or propane appliance is running.
- ★ Stay away from any area where engine or generator exhaust is vented.
- ★ Do not allow anyone to swim near the stern of the boat or sit on the stern deck or swim platform when the generator is running.
- ★ Do not leave your generator running at night, or when anchored, or when people are near the stern of a boat that is not in motion.
- ★ Do not ski, drag, or tube closer than 20 feet from a motorboat. Any closer, and carbon monoxide can be fatal!

- ★ Install carbon monoxide detectors in the living areas of your boat, test them frequently and never remove the batteries unless you are replacing them with new ones.
- ★ Keep your boat and motor properly maintained including keeping exhaust clamps tight and in place. Also, it's a good idea to replace exhaust hoses if there is cracking or deterioration.
- ★ If your boat is more than a few years old, hasn't been regularly professionally inspected and maintained or the generator or other engine was originally installed by a "backyard mechanic," have it checked by a service technician before you use it!

