

Worksite: \_\_\_\_\_ Instructor: \_\_\_\_\_ Date/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

## Topic C090: First Aid for Poisoning

**Introduction:** Although episodes of poisoning on the job are unusual, they do happen. Poisons are substances that cause illness or death when ingested or absorbed. Even relatively small amounts disrupt the normal metabolic function of the body. Poisons can be in the form of a liquid, solid, or gas and may enter the body by various routes; they can be swallowed, inhaled, absorbed through the skin, or injected under the skin (as in insect stings or snake bites). Various digestive and metabolic disorders can also cause the build-up of poisons. Even non-toxic substances taken in large quantities such as aspirin, vitamins, or mineral supplements may lead to poisoning if not used carefully.

*The most common types of poisoning at work are caused by breathing poisonous smoke, vapors, or fumes, inadvertently eating or drinking something toxic, being bitten by poisonous snakes or insects, or some form of overdose.*

**Inhalation:** Noxious gases are usually encountered when performing welding, torch, or other hot operations. Spraying processes using urethanes, lacquers, varnishes, and some paints can generate hazardous atmospheres that are poisonous and require breathing protection. Hot-roof tar kettles produce toxic fumes both from the burners, and from the tar that is being heated. Carbon monoxide (CO) is one of the more common forms of poison gas and is produced by fuel-burning power equipment such as generators and compressors. Carbon monoxide is colorless, odorless, tasteless, and potentially lethal. Symptoms of CO poisoning include migraine headache across the brow and temples, nausea, listlessness, disorientation, and numbness of the lips and tongue. If it is suspected that a person has succumbed to CO poisoning, they must be quickly removed from where they were found and taken immediately to an area where fresh air is available.

**Biological Poisoning:** On occasion, contaminated water sources turn up in a workplace. These sources can be a dirty water cooler, an old nasty hose, or may possibly originate from a newly laid water line. Always ensure that your drinking water supply is clean, fresh, and safe. Avoid sharing drinking cups or using community drinking containers.

**Food Precautions:** If you are packing a lunch, make certain you keep it in a cool place. Mayonnaise, for example, can turn toxic in only a few hours if not kept cool. This is true of many other foods (especially those which contain egg, milk, and meat products). Food poisoning is caused by ingesting food that contains toxic substances produced by bacteria. These toxins are some of the most potent poisons known and can severely damage nerves and muscles. Even minute amounts of these toxins which enter the body by ingestion, inhalation, or absorption through the eye or a break in the skin can cause serious illness. If it is apparent the person is acutely affected, they should be taken to the hospital immediately.

**Non-Prescription, Over the Counter Medications:** Acetaminophen, aspirin, cold remedies, and allergy relief capsules can over-accumulate in the body and easily turn toxic if used excessively during a strenuous workday. Be careful when using any medication on the job. Read the warnings and limitations pertaining to each medication (especially when operating equipment and machinery).

*If the poisoning victim is not breathing, and you are properly trained, initiate rescue breathing without delay. If the victim is unconscious but breathing, place him or her in the recovery position (on their side). Immediately contact Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and the local Poison Control Center and proceed as directed.*

**Conclusion:** Many workplace processes can generate toxic substances or fumes that under certain circumstances can easily become lethal. Learn to recognize the potential hazards created during workday operations and be aware of poisonous substances. Read the MSDS for any chemicals used in the workplace. Follow these guidelines for a safer workplace.

**Employee Attendance:** (Names or signatures of personnel who are attending this meeting)

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*These guidelines do not supersede local, state, or federal regulations and must not be construed as a substitute for, or legal interpretation of, any OSHA regulations.*