

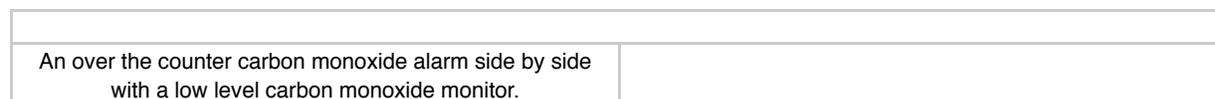
## The most common places to get carbon monoxide poisoned

Carbon monoxide poisoning has been a heavily talked about subject this week with the poisoning of close to 50 people in an Atlanta elementary school. In this school ambient CO levels were measured at close to 1700 ppm. Within the past month, two of the most common places that you can get carbon monoxide poisoning have appeared in the news. This week it was the elementary school in Atlanta. Approximately three weeks ago it was at an Embassy Suites located in Burlingame California where 500 people were evacuated from their rooms.

In the Carbon Monoxide and Combustion class I teach with Jim Davis, we discuss the most common places that you can get CO poisoned. There are four places that seem to have this problem more than the others though. The scary part about these four places is they have two things in common.

1. There are typically a lot of people present in these four locations.
2. There are typically no means of protection from carbon monoxide for the people in these four locations.

The assumption and push that is being made right now is that carbon monoxide alarms should be installed in a school or hotel and everybody will be safe from carbon monoxide right? Don't bet on it. Last year in this blog I wrote about [the differences between over the counter store bought carbon monoxide alarms and low level carbon monoxide monitors](#). The differences are astounding. One thing that will be the outcome if carbon monoxide alarms are mandated is a false sense of security as people will now think they are safe. This couldn't be further from the truth, especially for children and the elderly.



Still wondering where the four most common places you could get carbon monoxide poisoning are?

### **1. Hotels**

All it takes is a quick Google search to find that hotels seem to lead the way in carbon monoxide related incidents. One of the last places you would expect to get poisoned is while on vacation or away on business. On June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2006 at a Days Inn Motel in Ocean City Maryland a father and daughter lost their lives due to carbon monoxide poisoning. This poisoning resulted in the loss of two family members and a 30 million dollar lawsuit. It took the death of these two people in that city to get action started in that area, yet it already seems to be forgotten by many.

### **2. Nursing Homes**

The second most common place is nursing homes. Do you have any loved ones who currently reside at a nursing home? Those who are elderly should be considered a high risk from carbon monoxide at lower levels. The sad thing about over the counter carbon monoxide alarms is that they are designed for middle aged healthy adults, not those who are elderly. Those who need the protection the most just don't receive it from over the counter devices.

### **3. Schools**

As was seen this week, schools also account for one of the most common places to be carbon monoxide poisoned. For those of you who are reading this, especially if you have children they are at risk. Smaller children are at just as much a risk as the elderly with long term effects being possible that may hinder them the rest of their lives.

#### **4. Multi-Family**

Rounding out the list is multi-family residences including condos and apartments. There are multi-family applications around the country this very day that are poisoning people and they don't know what to do. One complex that has been in news reports multiple times simply keeps guessing at how to fix the issues instead of truly addressing them. All the time those who live there continue to be poisoned.

So what's the common thread among all these locations? Water Heaters and the amount of them installed at these locations. Boilers make this classification too by the way. Issues with these appliances and their installation are the key to solving these issues, yet most will continue to guess with no testing to back up their claims.

Now that the Atlanta case has national media attention the finger pointing will probably begin. Reporters have already obtained an inspection report from a year ago stating the boiler was safe at that time. I wonder how these boilers were tested. News reports are already leaking that it is assumed the issue may have been a misaligned flue pipe or bad water valve. Guessing in a Carbon Monoxide investigation will typically have disastrous results. They could especially be disastrous for the kids in this school if the problem isn't isolated by somebody who knows how to diagnose these problems.

So what can you do? Make sure you have some form of low level CO protection with you or your loved ones. It's the first step that you can take. The second step is to make sure that any fuel fired systems in a building have been tested for safety by those with the proper training.

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