


Carbon Monoxide


CHEMICAL STRUCTURE:



DESCRIPTION:
Carbon Monoxide is made up of one carbon atom and one oxygen atom.

MAIN SOURCES:

- Road transport
- Incomplete combustion in BBQs
lawn mowers or solid fuel burners
- Smoking
- Oast Houses
(in the past!)



Carbon monoxide is:

- **A colourless, odourless and tasteless gas that is slightly less dense than air.**
- **Made up of 1 carbon and 1 oxygen atom.**

CO is produced by the incomplete burning (i.e. there is not enough oxygen for each carbon atom to combine with two oxygen atoms) of carbon-based fuels, including petrol, diesel, gas, oil, wood and coal - this could have been a particular problem historically in Kent when wood or charcoal fires were used to dry hops in Oast Houses. In recent years though CO is mostly produced by road transport, in particular petrol – vehicles.

If you have a solid or gas boiler or fire or other non-electrical heating you may have a CO sensor/alarm to warn of CO emission if the appliance is not operating correctly. CO emissions can kill within minutes if inhaled. The early symptoms can be nausea/feeling sick and a feeling of disorientation. Carbon-based fuels are generally safe to use, it is only when the fuel does not burn completely so that CO is produced instead

of CO₂ which is formed when combustion is complete (i.e. in the presence of plenty of oxygen).

CO can affect the transport of oxygen in the blood and reduce the supply of oxygen to the heart, particularly in people suffering from heart disease.