

# Carbon Monoxide The Silent Killer



Even though first responders are trained to understand the dangers of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning and to recognize potential signs and symptoms, CO poisoning can go unrecognized and untreated, leading to short-term risk and long-term health problems.

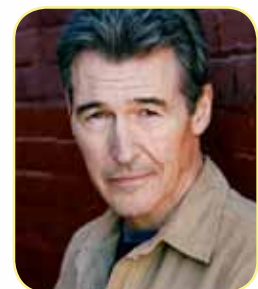
## KNOW THE FACTS ABOUT CO POISONING

- > CO poisoning can be difficult to detect.
  - CO poisoning can present with flu-like symptoms, but it is also possible to be poisoned without having any symptoms at all.<sup>1</sup>
- > CO poisoning puts firefighters at significant risk at the scene of a fire.
  - Even mild CO poisoning causes mental confusion, which can lead to poor decision making, putting both the exposed firefighter and others on the fire scene at risk.<sup>2</sup>
  - Mild CO poisoning can also rob the heart and brain of oxygen – nearly 50% of line of duty firefighter deaths are attributed to heart disease or stroke.<sup>3</sup> That's why new NFPA 1584 rehab standards support the use of on-scene CO testing.<sup>4</sup>
- > CO poisoning significantly increases long-term health risks.
  - Just one severe CO poisoning almost doubles the risk of premature death.<sup>5</sup>
  - Consistent exposure to CO poisoning may cause long term heart and brain damage.<sup>6</sup>

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO PROTECT YOURSELF

- > Wear your mask during overhaul
- > Test for carbon monoxide in the blood with an approved noninvasive device

“Firefighters take necessary risks every day, but CO is an unnecessary risk. Educate yourself on CO, wear your mask during overhaul, avoid exposure, and get yourself tested... so you'll be around to share with your family, life's most precious moments.”



**RANDOLPH MANTOOTH**  
Johnny Gage from *Emergency!*

<sup>1</sup> Hampson NB et al. American Journal of Emergency Medicine. 2008; 26:665-669. <sup>2</sup> Jakubowski G. FireRescue Magazine. 2004; 22(11):52-55. <sup>3</sup> Bledsoe BE. FireRescue Magazine. 2005. <sup>4</sup> NFPA 1584: Standards on the Rehabilitation Process for Members During Emergency Operations and Training Exercises. Annex A section A.6.2.6.4(1). <sup>5</sup> Hampson NB et al. Crit Care Med. 2009; 37(6):1941-47. <sup>6</sup> Bledsoe BE. Journal of Emergency Medical Services. 2007; 32:54-59.