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CARBON MONOXIDE AND YOUR CLEANING EQUIPMENT

Recently, there have been some published articles concerning the tragic death of two carpet cleaners who allegedly were overcome by the exhaust fumes from their machine or van. We applaud these articles for communicating the very important message that cleaners must be conscientious about where the exhaust fumes are going. However, there are some areas with which a further discussion is needed.

Articles have suggested that the high velocity of exhaust fumes from a truck mount are not desired. However, if the unit is the type where the exhaust exits from the unit's front, then high velocity of exhaust fumes is desired. In this situation, the operation of the unit is at greatest risk; therefore, it is an advantage to get the exhaust fumes as far from the van as possible. As it has been said in previous articles, the position of the unit is very important. The exhaust should be directed away from openings to structures, and away from people.

There has also been some question as to whether the engine and van should be exhausted together. Quite simply, by adding as much air to the exhaust as possible, you dilute the carbon monoxide. The ideal situation is having heavily diluted air being pushed as far away from the van and building as possible.

There are also suggestions that exhaust of the unit should be through the floor of the van. This also can be a potential hazard. There have been cases, especially in older vans, of exhaust fumes building up inside of the van. This happens because the hot exhaust fumes rise and find their way through openings in the van's body. The inside of the van becomes enriched with exhaust fumes. Upon completion of the job, the van is closed up and the worker's are exposed to a very dangerous environment. If the exhaust is to be piped through the van's body, the ceiling is a better choice.

Some simple steps can be taken to alleviate potential hazards:

1. Never park your van inside a car port or garage when the unit or van is operating.
2. Do not allow the exhaust to be directed toward doors or windows.
3. Remember when operating a Power-Take-Off unit, the exhaust of the van still produces fumes.
4. Never stand directly in front of the van or the machine exhaust.
5. Always train all of your technicians about the safe operation of the equipment.