

## CO exposure—Insp # 1688101 Terry Little dba Auto Spa

A 52-year-old male owner and a 42 year old male car detailer passed away from high levels of carbon monoxide when they left two cars running inside an enclosed garage.

The two men were working on detailing two cars inside an enclosed garage. The area was video recorded for security reasons and the video was obtained to determine what had happened as there were no other employees other than the employer and the employee. The victims could be seen turning the cars on in the enclosed garage with no ventilation. It possible the men closed the garage due to the cold weather that was occurring at the time. The victims are observed working on the two cars cleaning them for about an hour when the owner of the company walks into the office and is not seen again. The employee is observed smoking (fentanyl) according to police and approximately 30 minutes later goes into the same office as the owner. Neither man was seen again in the video. The two men were found in the adjunct office next to the garage passed away the next day. An individual, who was not an employee, arrived on site and found the two men dead in the office. The fire department and police arrived on site and stated they found both cars in the on position but one of them had run out of gas. The carbon monoxide meter used by the fire department did find high levels of carbon monoxide in the garage and in the office area where the victims were found.

Based on observations, measurements, and interviews obtained during the inspection, the following conclusions were made. The work-related factor that contributed most to the fatalities was the operation of a gasoline-fueled vehicle in an enclosed space. There was no ventilation as both garage doors and the pedestrian door were closed unless a vehicle needed to be moved into or out of the garage, or a person was coming into or out of the garage. The facility was not climate-controlled and there was no circulation of air by fans or other means. A non-work-related factor that likely significantly contributed to the fatalities was illicit drug use. The Bradley County Medical Examiner listed Fentanyl overdose and carbon monoxide as the causes of death for the employee. The owners cause of death were listed as methamphetamine overdose, carbon monoxide poisoning, and tetrahydrocannabinol overdose. The owner's toxicology found a carboxyhemoglobin level of 75% while the other employee's level was 70%.

### **Citation(s) as Originally Issued**

A complete inspection was conducted at the accident scene. Some of the items cited may not directly relate to the fatality.

**No citations were issued as the owner was not incorporated and the business ceased to exist upon his death.**

Had this not been the case, it would be recommended based on evidence that citations be issued for the following:

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- The employer did not implement engineering and work practice controls that would prevent the buildup of carbon monoxide in the enclosed garage.
- The employer did not ensure employees received hazard communication training on the chemicals they may be exposed to. Specifically, training on how to detect the presence or release of a hazardous chemical in the work area; the physical, health, simple asphyxiation, combustible dust, and pyrophoric gas hazards, as well as hazards not otherwise classified, of the chemicals in the work area; and the measures employees can take to protect themselves from these hazards, including specific procedures the employer has implemented to protect employees from exposure to hazardous chemicals, such as appropriate work practices, and emergency procedures could have prevented this occurrence.



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