



City of Olean Fire Department Media Release
Carbon Monoxide Incident at Washington West Elementary

On Wednesday July 6th, 2022 at 1:27 PM the City of Olean Fire Department was alerted to two construction workers not feeling well at Washington West Elementary possibly due to carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. An ambulance and engine responded to the scene to find two patients in obvious distress with levels of carbon monoxide present in their blood upon assessment. The building was ordered evacuated and a second ambulance and command vehicle responded to the scene.

Upon additional units arrival it was determined that there were a total of six patients. Allegany Rescue and EMS and Westons Mills ambulances were requested to the scene. Westons Mills Fire Department was placed on standby to assist with City of Olean coverage. Cattaraugus County Emergency Services provided communication's support between on-scene command and Olean General Hospital.

Four patients were treated on scene and subsequently refused transport. Two patients were transported to Olean General Hospital for further treatment and evaluation.

The cause of the incident was due to propane powered construction equipment being operated in an area with minimal ventilation. The City of Olean Fire Department wants to remind people that carbon monoxide is an odorless and tasteless gas that is exhausted when hydrocarbon fueled equipment is operated. Signs and symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are: headache, fatigue, nausea and vomiting, altered level of consciousness and feeling generally ill. In late stages carbon monoxide can cause seizures, unresponsiveness, cherry red skin and death. The City of Olean Fire Department states it is imperative that any building with natural gas, propane, fuel oil, wood burning or kerosene powered equipment have carbon monoxide detectors present and installed per manufacturers' recommended guidelines and local building codes.