

Corrosion in Exhaust System Blamed for Deaths

Written by Steve Frank
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“Preliminary results indicate that the source of the elevated carbon monoxide levels in room 225 appears to have originated from the pool water heater located in the pool mechanical room located underneath room 225.”—Boone Police Chief Dana Crawford.

We now know what led to the triple tragedy—three deaths in two incidents at the Boone Best Western Hotel between mid April and early June. Testing from Federal and State officials found several avenues for carbon monoxide gas to leak from a pool heating system into guest rooms above, specifically, room 225, where the three died, according to Boone Police Chief Dana Crawford, “The exhaust system for the pool water heater had multiple deficiencies, several avenues for carbon monoxide entry into room 225 have been observed.”

Boone Fire Chief Jimmy Isaacs said that, in this case, corrosion was not checked, “I think a lot of this is going to come down to lack of maintenance. One thing we need to understand, pool areas are inherently corrosive because we have chlorine in the area, and chlorine is a very strong oxidizer which is going to accelerate the corrosion process in these areas. When you have a piece of equipment in these areas, it is going to require more maintenance.” And he said that clearly, laws need to be changed. He also said he had heard of at least three very similar cases—another in North Carolina—that he called “very similar.”

The investigation still has a long way to go, according to Chief Crawford, who said there may well be criminal charges, and that he had been in touch with the District Attorney’s office.