

# 1 The Sommerfeld ground-wave limit for a molecule adsorbed at a surface

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## 19 **Abstract**

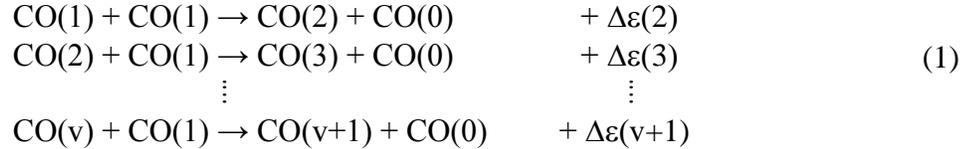
20 Using a mid-infrared emission spectrometer based on a superconducting nanowire single-photon  
21 detector (SNSPD), we observe the dynamics of vibrational energy pooling of CO adsorbed at the  
22 surface of a NaCl crystal. After exciting a majority of the CO molecules to their first vibrationally  
23 excited state ( $v=1$ ), we observe infrared emission from states up to  $v=27$ . Kinetic Monte Carlo  
24 simulations show that vibrational energy collects in a few CO molecules at the expense of those up  
25 to eight lattice sites away by selective excitation of NaCl's transverse phonons. The vibrating CO  
26 molecules behave like classical oscillating dipoles, losing their energy to NaCl lattice-vibrations  
27 via the electromagnetic near-field. This is analogous to Sommerfeld's description of the Earth's  
28 influence on radio transmission by ground waves.

## 30 **Main Text**

31 Polar molecules in optical lattices formed by interfering laser beams are platforms for studying  
32 quantum magnetism (1), quantum many-body dynamics (2) and quantum computing (3, 4). The  
33 electric fields at a crystalline surface are another form of lattice, one capable of orienting and  
34 ordering polar molecules. Hence, adsorbing molecules to low-temperature solids might be a  
35 complementary and, so far, unexplored approach to studying the lattice dynamics of polar  
36 molecules. Unfortunately, dynamical interactions between adsorbates and solid substrates are

37 typically much stronger than those between adsorbed molecules (5, 6). For example, an adsorbate's  
 38 vibrational energy may flow to a solid's electrons within picoseconds (7, 8) or, due to intrinsically  
 39 anharmonic interatomic forces, to lattice vibrations within nanoseconds (9, 10).

40 One exception is a monolayer of CO adsorbed to NaCl (100) – see Fig. 1c. Here, dipole-dipole  
 41 interactions between CO molecules are stronger than CO-NaCl interactions, conditions that lead to  
 42 vibrational energy pooling (VEP). Chang et al. observed VEP producing CO in states at least up to  
 43  $v=15$  by near-resonant vibration-to-vibration (V-V) energy transfer.



44 Unfortunately, detailed studies were impossible due to the low sensitivity and poor time-response  
 45 of infrared detectors available at that time (11).

46 In this work, we detect time- and wavelength-resolved laser-induced infrared fluorescence with a  
 47 superconducting nanowire single-photon detector (SNSPD) (12, 13) in order to study VEP in detail.  
 48 Kinetic Monte Carlo (kMC) simulations (14-18) of our observations reveal V-V energy transfer  
 49 occurring between CO molecules separated by more than eight lattice sites and show that the excess  
 50 energy represented by  $\Delta\varepsilon(v+1)$  in Eq. (1) is selectively absorbed by NaCl's transverse phonons.  
 51 Surprisingly, the vibrating CO molecules behave like classical oscillating dipoles, losing their  
 52 energy to NaCl lattice-vibrations via the electromagnetic near-field. These rates are quantitatively  
 53 described by a theory (19, 20) that has its origins in Sommerfeld's 1909 description of a radio  
 54 transmitter interacting with the Earth forming damped electromagnetic surface waves (21). This is  
 55 a weak coupling limit where the anharmonic interatomic forces normally so important to energy  
 56 flow can be completely neglected.

57 Figures 1A & B show infrared spectra of CO adsorbed to NaCl obtained in absorption (panel A)  
 58 and with laser-induced infrared fluorescence (panel B). The spectrum of the CO monolayer is  
 59 composed of a doublet centered at  $2052 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ , where the intensity pattern is polarization sensitive.  
 60 The feature at  $2055 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  results from the symmetric stretching of the two coupled CO molecules  
 61 in the  $2 \times 1$  unit cell (shown as a dashed rectangle in panel C) (22, 23). The  $2049 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  line observed  
 62 with s- and p-polarization arises from the anti-symmetric stretch vibration. For comparison, panel  
 63 B shows the laser-induced infrared fluorescence excitation spectrum obtained from a CO  
 64 monolayer for both p- and s- polarization. There can be no doubt that the laser-induced fluorescence  
 65 results from the excitation of CO molecules in the monolayer.

66 Figure 2A & B show the experimentally obtained fluorescence emission spectrum (in black)  
 67 compared to kMC simulations (in red). All features in these spectra result from the first overtone  
 68 emission of vibrationally excited CO; the emitting vibrational state is indicated by combs. Intensity  
 69 peaks reflecting enhanced vibrational populations are seen near  $v=7$ , 16 and 25; hereafter, we refer  
 70 to vibrational states near these three values of  $v$  as base-camp 1, 2, and 3, respectively.

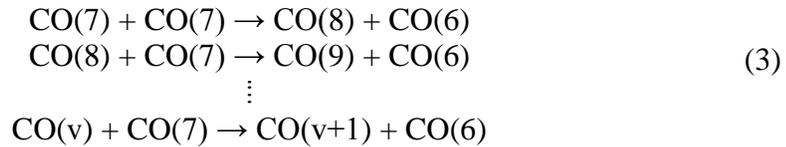
71 The red curve in Fig. 2A shows a kMC simulation under our experimental conditions where only  
 72 nearest neighbor V-V energy transfer is permitted, an assumption used in previous work (14-18).

73 This approach yields a peak in population at  $v \sim 8$  (base-camp 1), strongly resembling Fig. 3 of  
 74 Ref.'s (14) and (15) but markedly different than experiment. Note that a single molecule with only  
 75 4 nearest neighbors can still reach  $v=8$  since the nearest neighbors can transport vibrational quanta  
 76 from more distant molecules by process (2).



77 Population in states higher than  $v \sim 8$  is prevented by a one-phonon energy cut-off (14, 15) that is  
 78 reached when  $\Delta\varepsilon(v+1)$  – see Eq. (1) – exceeds the energy of the highest frequency phonon of the  
 79 NaCl substrate. Clearly, the nearest neighbor assumption in these kMC simulations fails to describe  
 80 the experiment.

81 To produce molecules in higher vibrational states, long distance interactions between vibrationally  
 82 excited molecules are needed. When vibrational energy pooling is modelled including V-V  
 83 exchange over an area of  $\sim 1000 \text{ \AA}^2$ , kMC simulations reproduce experiment well (Fig. 2B, red  
 84 curve). In this case, vibrationally excited molecules in base-camp 1 states can interact with one  
 85 another even though they are not likely to be nearest neighbors. For example, processes like

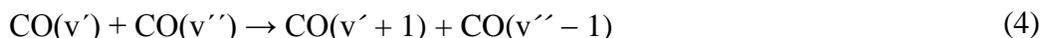


86 allow molecules in base-camp 1 states to climb to base-camp 2, where again the one-phonon energy  
 87 cut-off slows further pooling. Subsequently, molecules in base-camp 2 climb to base-camp 3 by  
 88 even longer range interactions. Vibrational states higher than  $v=27$  are not seen as energy transfer  
 89 to the lowest lying excited electronic states becomes possible (V-E energy transfer). The temporal  
 90 sequence of base-camp formation can also be seen by taking snap shots of the vibrational  
 91 distribution in the kMC simulations at different times (see Fig. 2C). This shows that base-camp 1  
 92 forms within 100 ns, base-camp 2 within 0.1-1  $\mu\text{s}$  and base-camp 3 only after 10-100  $\mu\text{s}$ .

93 The distance dependence of dipole-dipole interactions explains the sequential formation of base-  
 94 camps. From the kMC simulations of Fig. 2B, we find that the average distance between pooling  
 95 molecules forming base-camp 1 is 4.1  $\text{\AA}$  (approx. 1 lattice constant); whereas, for base-camp 2 this  
 96 distance is 11.7  $\text{\AA}$  and for base-camp 3 it is 17.6  $\text{\AA}$ . One-phonon-assisted V-V rates scale with  
 97 distance as  $R^{-8}$  – see supplementary material – meaning base-camp 1 is formed  $10^3$  times faster  
 98 than base-camp 2 which is formed  $10^2$  times faster than base-camp 3. This hierarchy of rates is  
 99 consistent with our experimental observations.

100 VEP selectively excites transverse NaCl phonons. Figure 3 (left panel) shows four kMC  
 101 simulations (red, blue, green & brown) of emission spectra using different assumptions about the  
 102 solid's phonon density of states and compares them to experiment (black). (The assumed phonon  
 103 density of states used in each simulation appears in the right panel.) While all four simulations  
 104 resemble experiment, we find best agreement with experiment when only transverse phonons are  
 105 allowed to accept energy in the ladder climbing process. In fact, only here do we see the formation  
 106 of three base-camps.

107 Under conditions of this work, VEP rapidly produces CO in many vibrationally excited states.  
108 Relaxation of the system back to vibrational equilibrium proceeds more slowly – see Fig. 4A where  
109 we show measurements of the time-resolved infrared fluorescence (open symbols) from seven  
110 vibrational states. Asymptotically, they all exhibit exponential decay (solid lines) with effective  
111 lifetimes, shown as open circles with error bars in Fig. 4B. For kMC simulations of the asymptotic  
112 exponential fall-off, we include three elementary processes: V-V energy transfer between CO  
113 molecules,



114 spontaneous radiative emission,



115 and vibrational energy transfer to the NaCl lattice vibrations.



116 For process (4) we use the same approach that allowed successful simulation of the data of Fig.'s  
117 2 and 3. See Section F of the SI. For process (5), we use the known radiative emission rate constants  
118 for gas-phase CO( $v'$ ). For process (6) we have tested two models of vibrational energy transfer.  
119 The solid squares in Fig. 4B are the effective lifetimes that result from implementation of the  
120 Skinner-Tully (ST) model described in detail in section F of the SI (14) – here, anharmonic  
121 coupling of CO vibration to NaCl phonons is mediated via the CO-NaCl surface bond (14-18). The  
122 predicted effective lifetimes are in poor agreement with experiment and they exhibit a vibrational  
123 quantum number dependence that is far too strong. (Note the logarithmic scale).

124 We also tested a model developed by Chance, Prock and Silbey (CPS) (19, 20), shown as filled  
125 circles in Fig. 4B. The CPS theory is briefly described in section F4 of the SI. The agreement with  
126 experiment is striking. CPS was developed to describe fluorescence lifetimes of dye molecules  
127 interacting through an inert spacer layer with an absorbing and reflecting solid (24-29). Here,  
128 coupling occurs through electromagnetic fields. The fact that CPS accurately reproduces the  
129 observations of this work, suggests that CO vibrational relaxation to NaCl lattice-vibration also  
130 occurs through the electromagnetic near-field despite the fact that there is a surface bond.

131 We emphasize that the weak vibrational quantum number dependence of the effective lifetime is  
132 indicative of coupling via the electromagnetic field – ST predicts a change in effective lifetime of  
133 four orders of magnitude over the same range of  $v$  where CPS predicts less than a ten-fold change.  
134 Of course, the ST model could in future be improved, an *ab initio* treatment of the coupling to the  
135 solid's phonon bath is still lacking. Despite this, we expect the strong  $v$ -dependence to be retained  
136 – see SI. Referring to Fig. 4B, we speculate that the steeper slope above  $v \sim 23$  indicates a transition  
137 to ST behavior.

138 Normally, we consider energy flow within an ensemble of oscillators to be a consequence of  
139 interatomic anharmonicity. This work shows that we can bind a molecule to a solid with sufficient  
140 strength to create samples that are stable over long periods of time without any influence of  
141 anharmonicity on the vibrational energy relaxation. In this Sommerfeld ground-wave limit,  
142 vibrational relaxation occurs exclusively via the electromagnetic field obeying the CPS model.

143 Here, the strength of coupling scales with the solid's imaginary index of refraction and the square  
144 of the molecule's transition dipole moment – see SI. Besides CO on NaCl, other similar systems  
145 are to be expected. CO on KCl and N<sub>2</sub> on NaCl are both interesting possibilities, whose CPS  
146 coupling would be even weaker than seen here. For dipolar adsorbates that find themselves within  
147 this limit, the solid's crystalline lattice can be exploited to produce spatial registry and orientational  
148 order while the strength of dipole-dipole interactions between the adsorbate molecules still far  
149 exceeds the adsorbate coupling to the solid. The prospect to study quantum lattice dynamics in  
150 systems like this appears promising.

151 Supplementary Content includes: 1) Materials and Methods, 2) Supplementary Text, 3) Figs. S1  
152 to S6 and 4) References (32-48)

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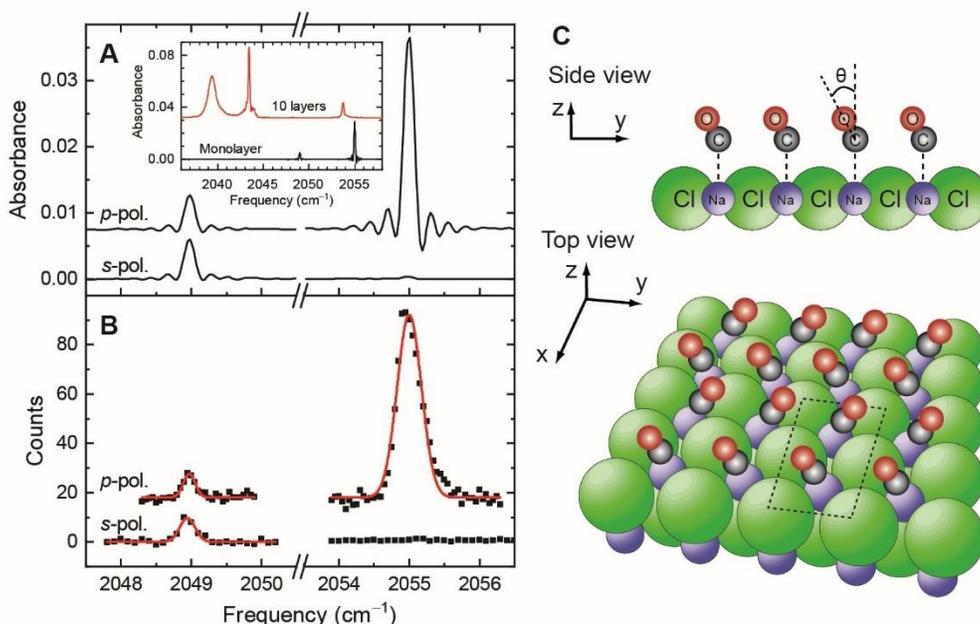
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206 **Acknowledgements**

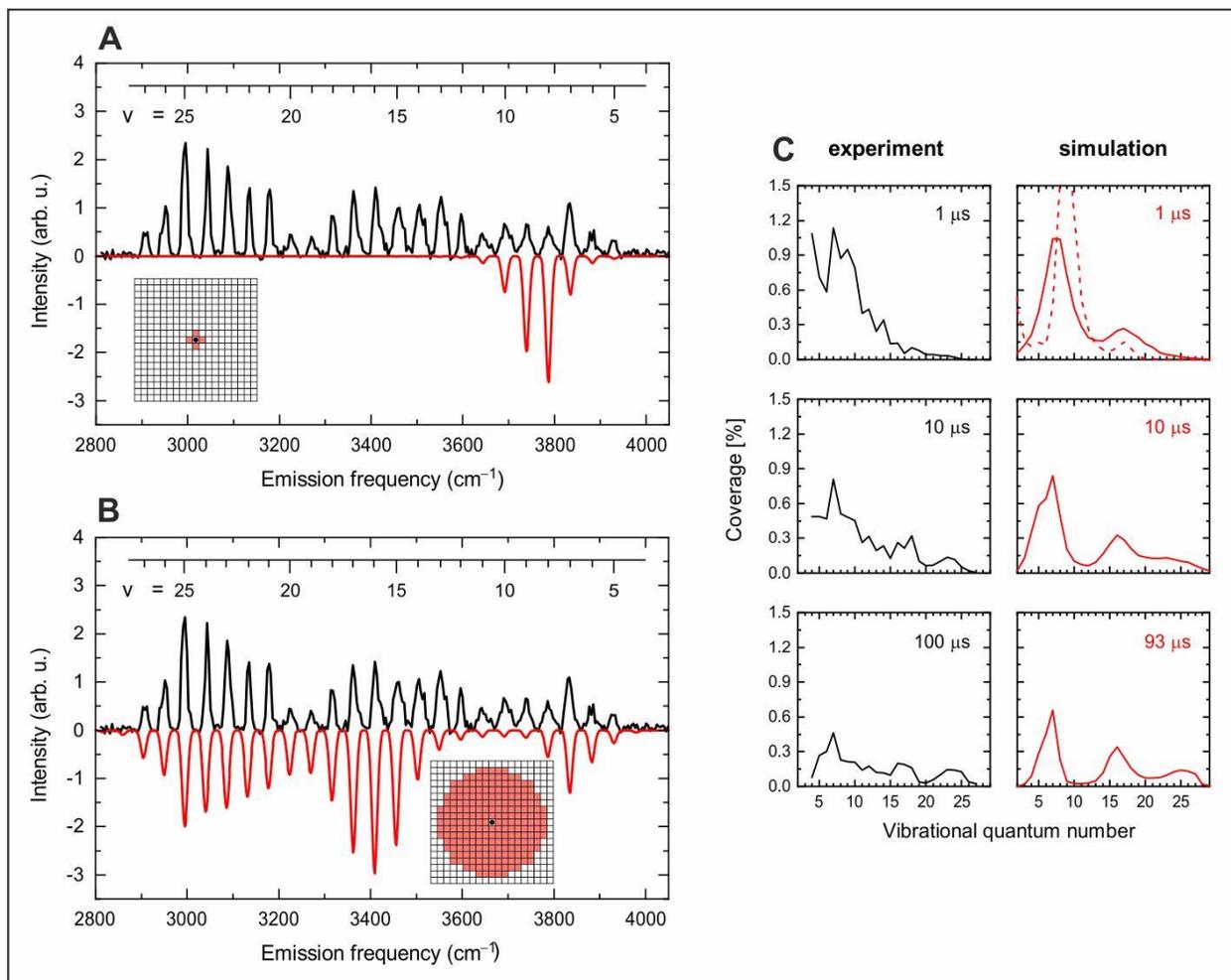
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213 **Figures**

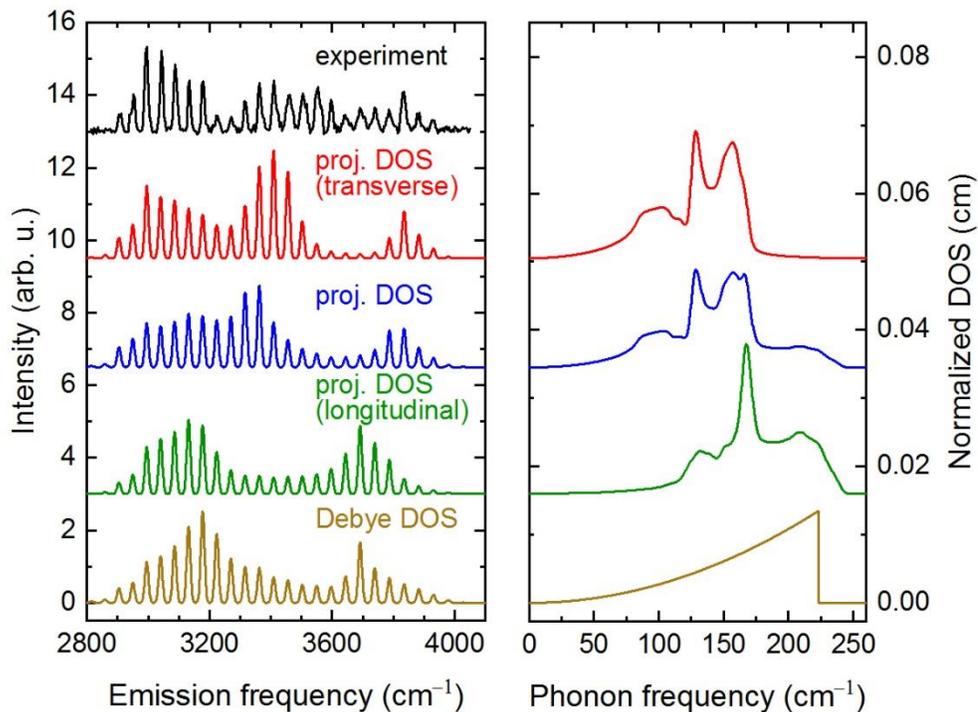


214  
 215 **Figure 1 | Structure and infrared spectroscopy of the  $^{13}\text{C}^{18}\text{O}$  monolayer on NaCl(100):** The  
 216 polarization dependent monolayer spectrum is observed with (A) FTIR absorbance spectroscopy and (B)  
 217 laser-induced infrared fluorescence by scanning the laser excitation frequency and integrating the total  
 218 fluorescence signal between 50 and 1050  $\mu\text{s}$  after the laser pulse. The spectra were recorded at a surface  
 219 temperature of  $\sim 7$  K. Note that the baseline of the p-polarized spectra is shifted for clarity. The inset in  
 220 panel A shows that the IR absorption spectrum of the CO monolayer (black) is clearly distinguishable  
 221 from that of a multilayer (red) for p-polarized light. CO molecules in the multilayer but not in contact with  
 222 the NaCl surface give rise to a doublet centered at  $2042\text{ cm}^{-1}$  (30, 31). The feature at  $2054\text{ cm}^{-1}$  arises from  
 223 the CO molecules at the buried NaCl interface (31). The monolayer line intensities have been corrected for  
 224 an offset of  $18^\circ$  in the polarization of the FTIR spectrometer light source. In panel B, the experimental  
 225 data is represented by square symbols and red lines are Gaussian fits to guide the eye. Panel C: Structure  
 226 of the monolayer CO on NaCl(100) (22, 23). The nearest neighbour CO-CO distance is  $3.96\text{ \AA}$ . At a  
 227 surface temperature below  $35\text{ K}$ , the CO molecules are tilted with respect to the surface normal by an  
 228 angle of  $25^\circ$ , and arranged in antiparallel oriented rows to form a  $p(2\times 1)$  unit cell, as depicted by the  
 229 dashed rectangle.



230  
 231 **Figure 2 | Base-camp pooling mechanism operating for a monolayer of CO on NaCl(100):** In panels  
 232 A and B, we show the experimentally observed emission spectrum (black solid lines) and simulated  
 233 spectra using kinetic Monte Carlo methods (red solid lines). The insets represent the CO lattice and the  
 234 red shaded areas visualize the interaction distance around a given CO molecule (black dot) used in each  
 235 kMC simulation. In panel A, the simulation allows only nearest neighbor V-V exchange, an assumption  
 236 that was also made in Ref.'s (14-16). In panel B, the simulation includes molecular interactions out to a  
 237 distance of 34 Å. In each case, the monolayer feature at 2055 cm<sup>-1</sup> (Fig. 1B) was excited with a  
 238 narrowband infrared laser and the emission was dispersed through a monochromator and detected with an  
 239 SNSPD integrating the signal-counts between 50 and 250 μs after the laser pulse. Panel C: Snap shots in  
 240 the experimentally derived and simulated population distributions showing sequential formation of the  
 241 base-camps. Note that the red dashed line corresponds to the population distribution at 100 ns.

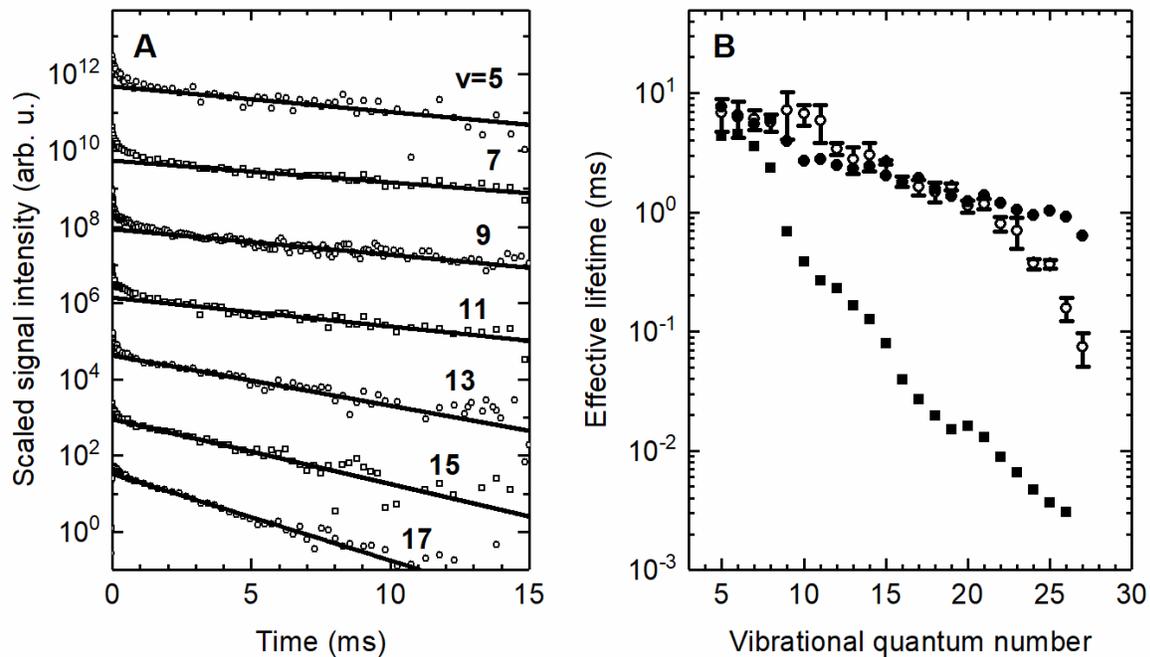
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245 **Figure 3 | Selective excitation of NaCl transverse phonons during energy pooling:** The experimental  
 246 emission spectrum (black solid line) is compared to kMC simulations assuming various NaCl phonon  
 247 density of states spectra. In each simulation, the CO – to – CO interaction distance extends up to 34 Å.  
 248 Each pooling step has an energy release to phonons of the solid; the probability depends on the density of  
 249 phonon states at that energy. Shown are the results for a Debye DOS (brown) and three DFT-based  
 250 DOSs: projection of the bulk DOS for NaCl onto the motion of the Na ions in the (100) plane (blue),  
 251 longitudinal contribution to the projected DOS (green), and transverse contribution to the projected DOS  
 252 (red).

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254  
 255 **Figure 4 | Relaxation of CO to the NaCl solid follows the CPS model:** Panel A shows representative  
 256 temporal profiles of wavelength resolved infrared fluorescence (open symbols); the emitting vibrational  
 257 state's quantum number is indicated. The long-time relaxation exhibits an exponential decay (black solid  
 258 lines). Note the y-axis is logarithmic and that the data are offset from one another along the y-axis for  
 259 clarity. The effective exponential lifetime obtained from these (and other) fits are shown in Panel B (black  
 260 open circles with error bars). The kMC simulations also exhibit long-time exponential behaviour. The  
 261 corresponding effective lifetimes are shown as solid symbols for two different vibrational relaxation  
 262 models: the Skinner-Tully model (solid squares) and the CPS model (solid circles).

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## Supplementary Materials for

The Sommerfeld ground-wave limit for an adsorbed molecule at a surface

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**This PDF file includes:**

Materials and Methods  
Supplementary Text  
Figs. S1 to S6

## 287 **Materials and Methods**

### 288 Experimental

289 The experimental apparatus has been described in detail (12, 13). Briefly, a monolayer of  
290 CO was prepared on a NaCl(100) surface by exposing the surface held at  $\leq 55$  K to isotopically  
291 purified  $^{13}\text{C}^{18}\text{O}$  (Sigma-Aldrich, 99% atom  $^{13}\text{C}$  and 99% atom  $^{18}\text{O}$ ) vapor. After the chamber had  
292 been evacuated, the sample was cooled to  $\sim 7$  K with a closed-cycle liquid Helium refrigerator  
293 (RDK-408D2, Sumitomo). A narrow band infrared laser pulse (0.05  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  FWHM bandwidth, 4.7  
294 ns FWHM pulse duration, 10 Hz repetition rate and  $\sim 120$   $\mu\text{J}$  pulse energy) was focused onto the  
295 surface to excite the adsorbed CO molecules via the fundamental C-O stretching vibration at  
296  $2055\text{ cm}^{-1}$ . The laser pumping of CO( $v=0 \rightarrow v=1$ ) transition is saturated, and a majority of the  
297 CO( $v=0$ ) molecules are vibrationally excited to the  $v=1$  state. Laser-induced infrared  
298 fluorescence was dispersed through a home built liquid-nitrogen cooled grating monochromator.  
299 The wavelength-resolved temporal profiles were detected using a single photon counting detector  
300 based on an amorphous tungsten silicide (a-WSi) superconducting nanowire, whose output was  
301 recorded by a multichannel scaler (MCS6A-2, FAST ComTec GmbH).

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### 302 Kinetic Monte Carlo Simulations

304 A rejection-free kinetic Monte Carlo algorithm based on the original FORTRAN code of  
305 Ref.'s (14, 17) was used. The code has been extended to include vibrational energy pooling  
306 beyond next-neighbor distances, overtone fluorescence, V-E transfer and stimulated emission.  
307 The simulation results are averaged over 50 trajectories where one trajectory consists of a  
308  $100 \times 100$  grid of  $^{13}\text{C}^{18}\text{O}$  molecules in a square lattice ( $3.96\text{ \AA}$ ) with periodic boundary conditions.  
309 The simulation temperature of 11 K is chosen slightly above the experimental temperature of 7  
310 K, which is measured next to the NaCl crystal. Initially all population is assumed to be in  $v=0$   
311 and we let the simulation evolve for about 33 ms after laser excitation. The highest vibrational  
312 state considered is  $v=35$ . Rate constants are calculated a priori for the following kinetic  
313 elementary steps (see section F of supplementary text for the corresponding equations):  
314 stimulated emission and absorption of the  $v=1 \leftarrow 0$  transition, vibrational energy pooling  
315 reactions, radiative and non-radiative vibrational relaxation processes, and V-E transfer for high  
316 vibrational states.

317 The laser excitation rate is simulated by a temporal Gaussian profile with a FWHM of 4.7 ns and  
318 a peak excitation rate of  $3.44 \times 10^9\text{ s}^{-1}$ . The vibrational energy pooling rate constants for the  
319 reaction  $\text{CO}(n) + \text{CO}(m) \rightarrow \text{CO}(n+1) + \text{CO}(m-1)$  are calculated based on the model presented in  
320 Ref.'s (14, 17). Since the dipole-dipole interaction potential between the CO molecules changes  
321 only slightly for the tilted ( $2 \times 1$ ) structure, we assume molecules oriented along the surface  
322 normal for convenience. The maximum interaction distance is about  $34\text{ \AA}$  unless otherwise  
323 stated. The integrals over the phononic DOS are calculated numerically considering energy  
324 pooling processes involving up to 3 phonons. Since the model assumes that the adsorbed CO  
325 molecules follow the surface-parallel motion of the Na ions underneath, a more realistic DOS is  
326 used by projecting the bulk DOS for NaCl onto the motion of the Na ions in the (100) plane.  
327 Radiative relaxation by fluorescence is treated as in Ref.'s (14, 16) including fundamental, 1st  
328 and 2nd overtone emission. Vibrational relaxation is based on the CPS model for all simulations  
329 except for the one shown in Fig. 4 (solid squares). Vibrational relaxation according to the  
330 Skinner-Tully model is based on Ref.'s (14-18), without further modifications, i.e., assuming a  
331 phonon DOS based on the Debye model coupled with the deformation potential approximation.  
332 V-E transfer is included for vibrational states with  $v \geq 28$  using a fixed rate of  $1 \times 10^5\text{ s}^{-1}$ ,  
333 effectively transferring these vibrational states into  $v=0$ .

334 **Supplementary Text**

335 **A. Preparation of monolayer and multilayer CO samples on NaCl(100)**

336 The monolayer and multilayer CO samples are prepared by exposing the UHV-cleaved  
337 NaCl(100) surface to a backfilling CO pressure at controlled surface temperatures. Before gas  
338 admission, the surface is cleaned by briefly annealing to 390 K to remove any adsorbates (H<sub>2</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>O,  
339 CO and CO<sub>2</sub>) (32), and the CO gas sample (Sigma-Aldrich, 99% atom <sup>13</sup>C and 99% atom <sup>18</sup>O) from  
340 a lecture bottle is purified using a liquid nitrogen trap. For preparation of a monolayer sample, the  
341 surface temperature is held at T<sub>s</sub>= 55 K and a leak valve admits CO into the UHV chamber at a  
342 pressure of 1×10<sup>-6</sup> mbar. This is continued until coverage is saturated; i.e., the FTIR absorption  
343 band remains unchanged with a further exposure. Next, we turn off the surface heating while slowly  
344 closing the leak valve and stop gas admission completely when the surface reaches T<sub>s</sub> =35 K. We  
345 then hold the surface temperature at 35 K until the chamber pressure is below 5 × 10<sup>-10</sup> mbar; this  
346 prevents growth of CO overlayers, which is possible only at T<sub>s</sub> < 32 K (30, 31). Subsequently, the  
347 surface is cooled to the temperature needed for the experiment; typically 7 K. A multilayer sample  
348 is grown epitaxially on top of the monolayer (30) by additional CO dosing at T<sub>s</sub> < 15 K. At a CO  
349 background pressure of 1×10<sup>-6</sup> mbar, we observe a growth rate of about 100-monolayer per minute.  
350 After the dosing, the surface is briefly annealed to 25 K for several minutes to help form an  
351 equilibrium crystal structure of the multilayer sample (31).

352 **B. LiIO<sub>3</sub> optical parametric amplifier laser**

353 A tunable dye laser pulse at around 863 nm (LDS867 in ethanol, ~14 mJ, Cobra-Stretch, Sirah  
354 Lasertechnik GmbH) and a seeded 1064 nm laser pulse (130 mJ, 10 Hz, ca. 6 ns pulse width,  
355 Continuum Surelite III-10EX) are mixed in a temperature stabilized LiIO<sub>3</sub> crystal (100 °C) for  
356 difference-frequency generation (DFG). The dye laser is pumped by the 532 nm second harmonic  
357 output of the Nd:YAG laser. The DFG output is tuneable from 1950 to 2650 cm<sup>-1</sup> with pulse  
358 energies in the range 70 μJ to 250 μJ.

360 The IR laser frequency is calibrated with photoacoustic spectroscopy of CO in a gas cell (ca.  
361 10 mbar). Also from photoacoustic measurements, the bandwidth of the IR laser was determined  
362 to be 0.05 cm<sup>-1</sup>. The pulse duration measured using the SNSPD was 4.7 ns (FWHM) (13).

364 **C. Vibrational spectroscopic constants of CO/NaCl(100)**

365 Based on an anharmonic oscillator model of the monolayer CO vibrational energy levels

$$E_v = (v + 1/2) \omega_e - (v + 1/2)^2 \omega_e x_e + (v + 1/2)^3 \omega_e y_e \quad (1)$$

366 we assign the emission spectrum by fitting the measured overtone emission frequencies (S1) to the  
367 following expression:

$$\tilde{\nu}_{v \rightarrow v-2} = E_v - E_{v-2} = 2\omega_e - (4v - 2) \omega_e x_e + 6v(v - 1) \omega_e y_e + \frac{7 \omega_e y_e}{2}. \quad (2)$$

368 This yields the spectroscopic constants  $\omega_e = (2074.6 \pm 0.9) \text{ cm}^{-1}$ ,  $\omega_e x_e = (12.22 \pm 0.04) \text{ cm}^{-1}$  and  
369  $\omega_e y_e = (0.012 \pm 0.002) \text{ cm}^{-1}$ . The uncertainties result from 10 measurements on different days and  
370 different NaCl(100) sample surfaces. We note that the wavelengths identified by Eq. 2 differ from  
371 both CO gas phase and multilayer emission frequencies.  
372

373  
374

#### D. Vibrational state-resolved temporal profiles of CO overtone emission

375 The fluorescence intensity temporal profiles were measured using the SNSPD (12) together  
376 with a multi-channel scaler (MCS6A-2, FAST ComTec GmbH). We determined the time zero by  
377 measuring the arrival time of scattered laser light. The monochromator was tuned to each of the  
378 detected overtone ( $v \rightarrow v-2$ ) emission lines (main manuscript, Fig. 2). All temporal profiles were  
379 recorded in a time range of  $-1.0$  to  $50$  ms with a bin-time of  $51.2$  ns in order to follow the rapid  
380 vibrational energy pooling dynamics as well as the slow relaxation dynamics. The measured raw  
381 data were re-binned to achieve satisfactory S/N ratio at a cost of reduced time resolution. The  
382 acquisition time varied between  $6$  and  $26$  minutes depending on the signal intensity.

383 Fig. S2 presents fluorescence temporal profiles for all the monolayer CO vibrational states  
384 ( $v=4-27$ ) detected in this experiment on a linear (Fig. S2-A) and logarithmic time-scale (Fig. S2-  
385 B). The fluorescence rise is faster than  $1 \mu\text{s}$  for the lower states  $v=4-12$  and cannot be resolved due  
386 to insufficient S/N.

387  
388

#### E. Calibration of absolute vibrational populations

389 We convert the measured dispersed fluorescence intensity temporal profiles  $I_n(t)$  to relative  
390 time-dependent populations  $P_n(t)$  for each vibrational state  $n$  as was described in Ref. (12):

$$P_n(t) = \frac{I_n(t)}{\eta \cdot k_f} \quad (3)$$

391  $\eta$  and  $k_f$  are the wavelength dependent system detection efficiency and the fluorescence rate,  
392 respectively. Fig. S3 shows the relative error of  $P_n(t)$  derived from fluorescence spectra integrated  
393 over  $0.05-1.05$  ms.

394 We estimate the absolute population by comparison with the kinetic Monte Carlo (kMC)  
395 simulation. At short times after the laser pulse, the total number of vibrational quanta in the CO  
396 monolayer is conserved because vibrational energy loss is unimportant. In other words,  
397  $\sum_n n \cdot P_n(t) \approx \text{const.}$  for  $t < 10 \mu\text{s}$ . From our kMC simulation,  $\sum_n n \cdot P_n(t = 1 \mu\text{s}) = 0.73$  was  
398 determined and used to calculate the absolute time-dependent vibrational populations in Fig. S2.

399  
400

#### F. Rate constants for kinetic Monte Carlo (kMC) simulations

401 Vibrational dynamics in the CO monolayer on NaCl is governed by the interplay of vibrational  
402 energy pooling (VEP), fluorescence, non-radiative CO vibrational energy transfer to the NaCl  
403 substrate and vibration-to-electronic (V-E) energy transfer. We calculate the corresponding rate  
404 constants based on available theoretical models. The results are summarized in Fig. S4.

405  
406

##### 1. Fluorescence rate constants

407 The fluorescence rate constants,  $k_f$ , are calculated based on standard spectroscopic  
408 relationships (12, 14, 16) using the following parameter values for the monolayer  $^{13}\text{C}^{18}\text{O}$  on NaCl  
409 (100): slope of the electric dipole moment function  $\mu' = 3.2 \text{ D}/\text{\AA}$  (assuming the optical and physical  
410 properties of the physisorbed CO on NaCl do not change appreciably from those of the gas-phase)

411 (33), Morse parameter  $a = 2.34 \text{ \AA}^{-1}$ , and the spectroscopic constants  $\omega_e = 2074.6 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  and  $\omega_e x_e =$   
 412  $12.22 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  (see Section C). Note that the calculated rates for 1<sup>st</sup> overtone ( $\Delta v=2$ ) and 2<sup>nd</sup> overtone  
 413 emission ( $\Delta v=3$ ) are also included in the kMC simulations but not shown in Fig. S4.

## 414 2. Vibrational energy pooling rate constants

416 The VEP rate constants are calculated based on the model from Corcelli and Tully (14, 15, 17)  
 417 with a modified treatment of the NaCl phonon spectrum. Note that there is a minor typographical  
 418 error in the formula for  $k_{nm}^{(p)}$  in Ref. (14) but Corcelli's PhD thesis (17) shows the correct equation.  
 419 The pooling rate constant,  $k_{nm}$ , for a pooling reaction  $\text{CO}(n) + \text{CO}(m) \rightarrow \text{CO}(n+1) + \text{CO}(m-1)$   
 420 for a given distance  $R$  (in SI units) is:

$$k_{nm} = \sum_{p=1}^{p_{\max}} k_{nm}^{(p)} \quad (4)$$

$$k_{nm}^{(p)} = \frac{2\pi}{\hbar} p! f_p^2 2^p |\langle n|x|n+1\rangle|^2 |\langle m|x|m-1\rangle|^2 \left( \frac{(n(E_{nm}/p) + 1)\hbar}{2M} \right)^p I_p \quad (5)$$

$$f_p = (-1)^p \frac{\mu'^2 (p+1)(p+2)}{(4\pi\epsilon_0)2R^{p+3}} \quad (6)$$

$$I_p = \int_0^\infty dE_1 \cdots \int_0^\infty dE_p \frac{\rho(E_1)}{E_1} \cdots \frac{\rho(E_p)}{E_p} \delta(E_{nm} - E_1 - \cdots - E_p) \quad (7)$$

$$n(E) = \left( \exp\left(\frac{E}{k_B T}\right) - 1 \right)^{-1} \quad (8)$$

421 where  $p$  is the number of phonons involved and  $p_{\max} = 3$ , since processes involving more than 3  
 422 phonons do not yield significant rate constants for all n-m transitions that are of relevance here  
 423 (14).  $M$  is the mass of a Na atom (23 amu). The matrix elements of the relative bond coordinate  $x$   
 424 are calculated as for the fluorescence rate constants (see Ref.'s (12, 14, 16, 33)). The electric dipole  
 425 moment function is assumed to be linear with a slope of  $\mu' = 3.2 \text{ D/\AA}$ , for the same reason as in  
 426 the calculation for the fluorescence rate constants. The integrals  $I_p$  are evaluated numerically for a  
 427 given phonon density of states (DOS),  $\rho(E)$ , which is normalized such that  $\int_0^\infty dE \rho(E) = 1$ ,  
 428 where the energy mismatch  $E_{nm}$  is positive for exothermic reactions. Rate constants for reverse  
 429 endothermic reactions are derived from the rate constants of the exothermic reactions by detailed  
 430 balance.

431 Phonons for bulk NaCl in the rock-salt structure are calculated based on density functional  
 432 theory (DFT) using the exchange-correlation functional due to Perdew, Burke and Ernzerhof (34)  
 433 as implemented in the FHI-aims all electron DFT package (35). Tight settings are used for the basis  
 434 sets and integration grids together with equivalents of a  $4 \times 4 \times 4$  Monkhorst-Pack grid (36) for the  
 435 Brillouin zone sampling in the primitive unit cell. These settings yield a perfectly converged lattice  
 436 constant of  $5.698 \text{ \AA}$  in excellent agreement with earlier all-electron DFT calculations (37-39) and  
 437 a well-converged phonon DOS.

438 Force constants are calculated according to the finite displacement method (40) in 4x4x4  
 439 supercells of the primitive unit cell with optimal exploitation of symmetry as implemented in the  
 440 phonopy code (41). The total phonon DOS is then obtained based on a Fourier-interpolated  
 441 40x40x40 grid of phonon-wave vectors  $\mathbf{q}$  for all six phonon bands  $i$ , where  $E_{\mathbf{q}i}$  is the corresponding  
 442 energy equivalent of each phonon:

$$\rho^{\text{total}}(E) = \frac{1}{6} \sum_{\mathbf{q}} \sum_{i=1}^6 \delta(E - E_{\mathbf{q}i}) \quad (9)$$

443 Here and in the following, the delta functions are broadened by Gaussians with a very small width  
 444 of only 2.42  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  thanks to very dense  $\mathbf{q}$ -grid. Fig. S5 shows the results of the phonon DOS  
 445 calculations used in this work.

446 The model by Corcelli and Tully is based on the modulation of the dipole-dipole interaction  
 447 between two CO molecules. This is caused by phonons in the NaCl surface, that change the lateral  
 448 distance between two COs. These are phonons that involve lateral movement of the Na atom  
 449 directly beneath each CO molecule (see Fig. S6). Consequently, we use a phonon DOS that is  
 450 projected onto phonons which include Na-atom displacements in the (100) plane. Furthermore,  
 451 using the scalar product between the atom-wise displacement and the wave vectors of each phonon,  
 452 we construct the projected phonon DOS for transverse (T) or longitudinal (L) phonons

$$\rho^{\text{Na,(100); T,L}}(E) = \frac{1}{3} \sum_{\mathbf{q}} \sum_{i=1}^6 \delta(E - E_{\mathbf{q}i}) |\mathbf{p}_{\mathbf{q}i}^{\text{Na;T,L}}|^2. \quad (10)$$

453  $\mathbf{p}_{\mathbf{q}i}^{\text{Na;T,L}}$  is the transverse or longitudinal contribution of the normalized displacement vector  
 454  $\mathbf{e}_{\mathbf{q}i} = (\mathbf{e}_{\mathbf{q}i}^{\text{Na}}, \mathbf{e}_{\mathbf{q}i}^{\text{Cl}})$  for Na atoms only, i.e., entries for  $\mathbf{e}_{\mathbf{q}i}^{\text{Cl}}$  are set to zero:

$$\mathbf{p}_{\mathbf{q}i}^{\text{Na;T}} = \left( \frac{\mathbf{q} \cdot \mathbf{e}_{\mathbf{q}i}^{\text{Na}}}{|\mathbf{q}|} \frac{\mathbf{q}}{|\mathbf{q}|}, 0 \right) \quad (11)$$

$$\mathbf{p}_{\mathbf{q}i}^{\text{Na;L}} = \left( \mathbf{e}_{\mathbf{q}i}^{\text{Na}} - \frac{\mathbf{q} \cdot \mathbf{e}_{\mathbf{q}i}^{\text{Na}}}{|\mathbf{q}|} \frac{\mathbf{q}}{|\mathbf{q}|}, 0 \right). \quad (12)$$

455 Unless otherwise stated, all simulations are based on the transverse, projected DOS, which yields  
 456 excellent agreement with experiment. See Fig. 3 in the main text.

457 Rate constants for resonant energy V-V exchange are also calculated according to Ref.'s (14,  
 458 17):

$$k_{n,n+1} = \frac{\mu'^2 \langle n|x|n+1 \rangle^2}{\hbar \cdot \arccos(e^{-1/2}) (4\pi\epsilon_0) R^3}. \quad (13)$$

459 For two nearest neighbor CO molecules, the non-resonant rate constants  $k_{n1}$  are on the order of  
 460  $10^7$  to  $10^8$  s<sup>-1</sup>. The resonant rate constants are much larger, e.g.  $k_{01} = 1.8 \times 10^{11}$  s<sup>-1</sup>. The high  
 461 resonant rate constants allow for fast diffusion of single vibrational states but significantly slow  
 462 down the kMC simulations. To reduce the computation time, the resonant rate constants are scaled  
 463 by a factor of 1/100. No notable change in the vibrational energy distribution was found in test  
 464 simulations with a scaling factor of 1/10.

### 465 3. The Skinner-Tully model of CO vibrational energy transfer to the NaCl substrate

466 Fig. S6A depicts the ST model used for describing CO vibrational energy transfer to the NaCl  
 467 substrate (14, 15, 17, 18).

468 In this model, we calculate the non-radiative CO-NaCl energy transfer rate constants for a  
 469 given vibrational state  $n$  as (in SI units)

$$k_{\text{nr}}^{\text{ST}} = \sum_{p=1}^{p_{\text{max}}} k_n^{(p)} \quad (14)$$

$$k_n^{(p)} = \frac{1}{\hbar} |\langle n|x|n-1\rangle|^2 \left[ n \left( \frac{E_n}{p} \right) + 1 \right]^p \frac{f_p^2 I_p}{E_n p!} \quad (15)$$

$$f_p = (-1)^p (2^{p+1} - 2) D' \alpha'^{p+1} a_0^p \frac{m_{\text{O}}}{M_{\text{CO}}} \quad (16)$$

$$I_p = \lambda^p \frac{E_n}{\hbar c \tilde{\nu}_{\text{D}}} \sqrt{\frac{75\pi}{p}} \exp \left[ -\frac{75}{4p} \cdot \left( \frac{E_n}{\hbar c \tilde{\nu}_{\text{D}}} - \frac{4p}{5} \right)^2 \right] \quad (17)$$

470 where  $E_n$  is the energy dissipated to phonons. The sum in Eq. 14 is truncated at  $p_{\text{max}} =$   
 471  $\text{int}(E_n/\omega_{\text{D}}) + 11$ , since processes involving more phonons do not yield any further significant  
 472 contributions.  $m_{\text{O}}$  and  $m_{\text{CO}}$  are the masses of <sup>18</sup>O and <sup>13</sup>C<sup>18</sup>O, respectively,  $D' = 10.917$  eV and  
 473  $\alpha' = 2.34$  Å<sup>-1</sup> are the parameters of the Morse-type CO-NaCl adsorption potential,  $a_0$  is the Bohr  
 474 radius,  $\lambda = 0.522$  an empirical parameter describing the global system-bath coupling, and  $\tilde{\nu}_{\text{D}} =$   
 475  $223$  cm<sup>-1</sup> the Debye frequency of NaCl in cm<sup>-1</sup> (14). Other quantities are the same as in Section  
 476 F.1 and F.2. Note that the original work by Corcelli and Tully contains two typographical errors in  
 477 the formula for  $I_p$ . The corrected equations from Ref. (16) are used, where we would like to point  
 478 out another small typographical error in the formula for  $k_n^{(p)}$ .

479 The ST model predicts a strong vibrational state dependence (v-dependence) of  $k_{\text{nr}}$  as shown  
 480 in Fig. S4. The rate constants increase by more than five orders of magnitude between  $v=1$  and  
 481  $v=25$ . Note that the Skinner-Tully model relies on a coupling strength parameter,  $\lambda$ , which was  
 482 deduced empirically by matching the total fluorescence decay time constant ( $\tau = 4.3$  ms) reported  
 483 by Chang and Ewing (11) to kMC simulations in Ref. (14). According to Eq. 14-17, the absolute  
 484 magnitude of  $k_{\text{nr}}^{\text{ST}}$  is extremely sensitive to  $\lambda$ . However, we found that the dependence on  $\lambda$  is quite  
 485 similar for all the  $v$  states; hence, we expect that the strong  $v$ -dependence of  $k_{\text{nr}}^{\text{ST}}$  shown in Fig. S4  
 486 remains at all values of  $\lambda$ . Note also that adjusting the Debye frequency in Eq. 17 has a similar  
 487 effect.  
 488  
 489

#### 4. The Chance-Prock-Silbey model of CO vibrational energy transfer to the NaCl substrate

The CPS model (Fig. 6B) differs markedly from the ST model and has been described in detail in several seminal papers (19, 20, 42, 43). In particular, we recommend the review of Ref. (19). CPS is based on electromagnetic coupling to the solid, which absorbs and reflects light at the CO transition frequency, while the ST model relies on anharmonic coupling via the CO-NaCl surface bond. CPS was originally developed to explain the experimentally observed changes in fluorescence lifetime of an electronically excited molecule as its distance from a metallic surface is varied (24, 26, 29). Experimental control of the distance was accomplished by the introduction of inert organic spacer layers in the form of Langmuir-Blodgett-Kuhn films (44). Kuhn initially described the variation of lifetime with distance as a dipole emitter interacting with its electromagnetic echo field – i.e. the field reflected from the mirror. In his view, lifetime change is essentially a retardation effect where interference occurs between the emitting dipole and the image dipole set up in the solid. CPS showed that additional effects become important when the molecule comes close to the mirror, specifically creation of dipole-carrying excitations (e.g. plasmons and optical phonons) that are linked to the imaginary part of the solid's refractive index,  $\kappa$ . Working with a mathematical formalism written down to describe radio transmission in the presence of a partially conducting Earth (45), one that had its origins in Sommerfeld's ground wave paper (21), CPS were able to derive an exact expression within the classical limit that was valid at all distances (20) and gave excellent agreement with experiment (43). The most important extension in the theoretical treatment of CPS was to separate the lifetime of the dipole emitter into a radiative component, essentially the fluorescence lifetime, and a non-radiative component, where energy is transferred to the solid.

In the limit of small distances ( $d \rightarrow 0$ ), the CPS model provides an analytic solution for the non-radiative energy transfer rate to the solid. The rate constant,  $k_{nr}^{CPS}$ , is directly proportional to the square of the transition dipole moment of the molecule, which is proportional to  $k_f/\tilde{\nu}^3$ , as well as the imaginary part of the index of refraction,  $\kappa$  (19, 46).

$$\frac{k_{nr}^{CPS}}{k_f} = \frac{3\theta n\kappa}{16\pi^3 \tilde{\nu}^3 |\epsilon + 1|^2 d^3}. \quad (18)$$

where  $\tilde{\nu}$  is the CO emission frequency in  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ,  $\epsilon = (n + i\kappa)^2$  is the frequency dependent complex dielectric constant of NaCl at the emission frequency,  $\theta$  is the orientation parameter and is 1 for perpendicular dipole orientation, and  $d$  is the molecule's distance from the surface. For CO on NaCl:  $d = R_{C-Na} + M_O/(M_O + M_C) R_{C-O} = 3.36 \text{ \AA}$  and is the distance of the CO center-of-mass to the NaCl interface, where  $R_{C-Na} = 2.7 \text{ \AA}$  and  $R_{C-O} = 1.14 \text{ \AA}$  (47).  $M_O$  and  $M_C$  are the masses of  $^{18}\text{O}$  and  $^{13}\text{C}$ , respectively. The refractive index  $n$  and the extinction coefficient,  $\kappa$ , are almost constant ( $n = 1.52$  and  $\kappa = 1.8 \times 10^{-9}$ ) in the mid-IR wavelength range relevant to our work (1500-2600  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ) (48). While  $\kappa$  is quite small – NaCl is nominally transparent in the mid-infrared, this value is still large enough to have a clearly observable effect. We then calculate the  $\nu$ -dependent rate constants using the calculated CO gas phase fluorescence rates  $k_f(\nu)$  shown in Fig. S4 and the fundamental emission frequencies  $\tilde{\nu}(\Delta\nu = 1)$  of the monolayer  $^{13}\text{C}^{18}\text{O}$  determined from Eq. 1.

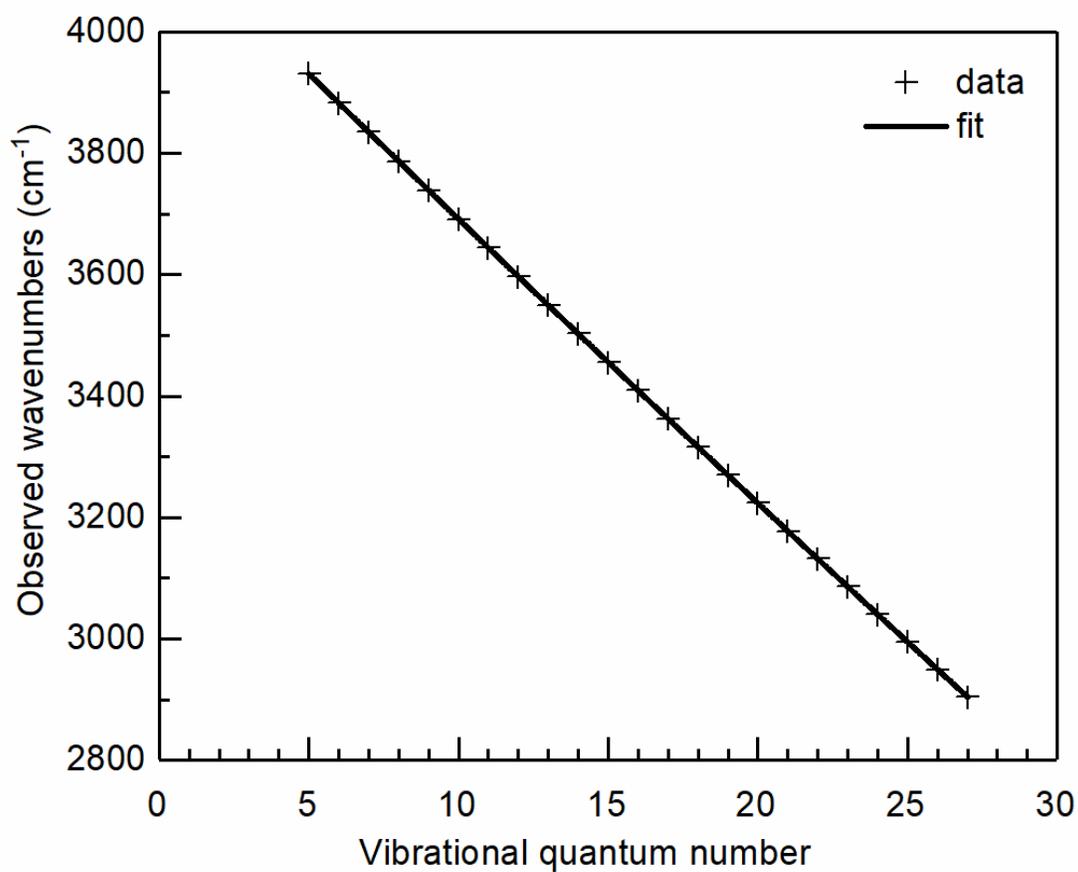
The calculated values for  $k_{nr}^{CPS}$  in Fig. S4 show a much weaker  $\nu$ -dependence than  $k_{nr}^{ST}$ , which is closely related to the  $\nu$ -dependence of the radiative rate constants  $k_f$ . This is a qualitative characteristic of the CPS model reflecting coupling via the electromagnetic field. This aspect of the CPS improves our confidence that even a more sophisticated treatment of the ST model or

534 another model based on mechanical coupling via the anharmonic potential energy surface would  
535 fail to agree with our experimental observations (Fig. 4B Main text). The ratio  $k_{\text{nr}}^{\text{CPS}}/k_{\text{f}}$  changes  
536 from 5 ( $v=1$ ) to 13 ( $v=27$ ) due to the  $\tilde{\nu}^{-3}$  dependence of Einstein A-coefficients,  $k_{\text{f}}$ , appearing in  
537 Eq. 18. The CPS model also predicts a reduction of the fluorescence rate by 10% due to interference  
538 of the emitted photon with itself upon reflection from the surface. Since  $k_{\text{f}}$  is about one order of  
539 magnitude smaller than  $k_{\text{nr}}^{\text{CPS}}$ , this effect on the emission rate is neglected in our simulations.

#### 540 **5. Vibrational-to-electronic (V-E) energy transfer rate constants**

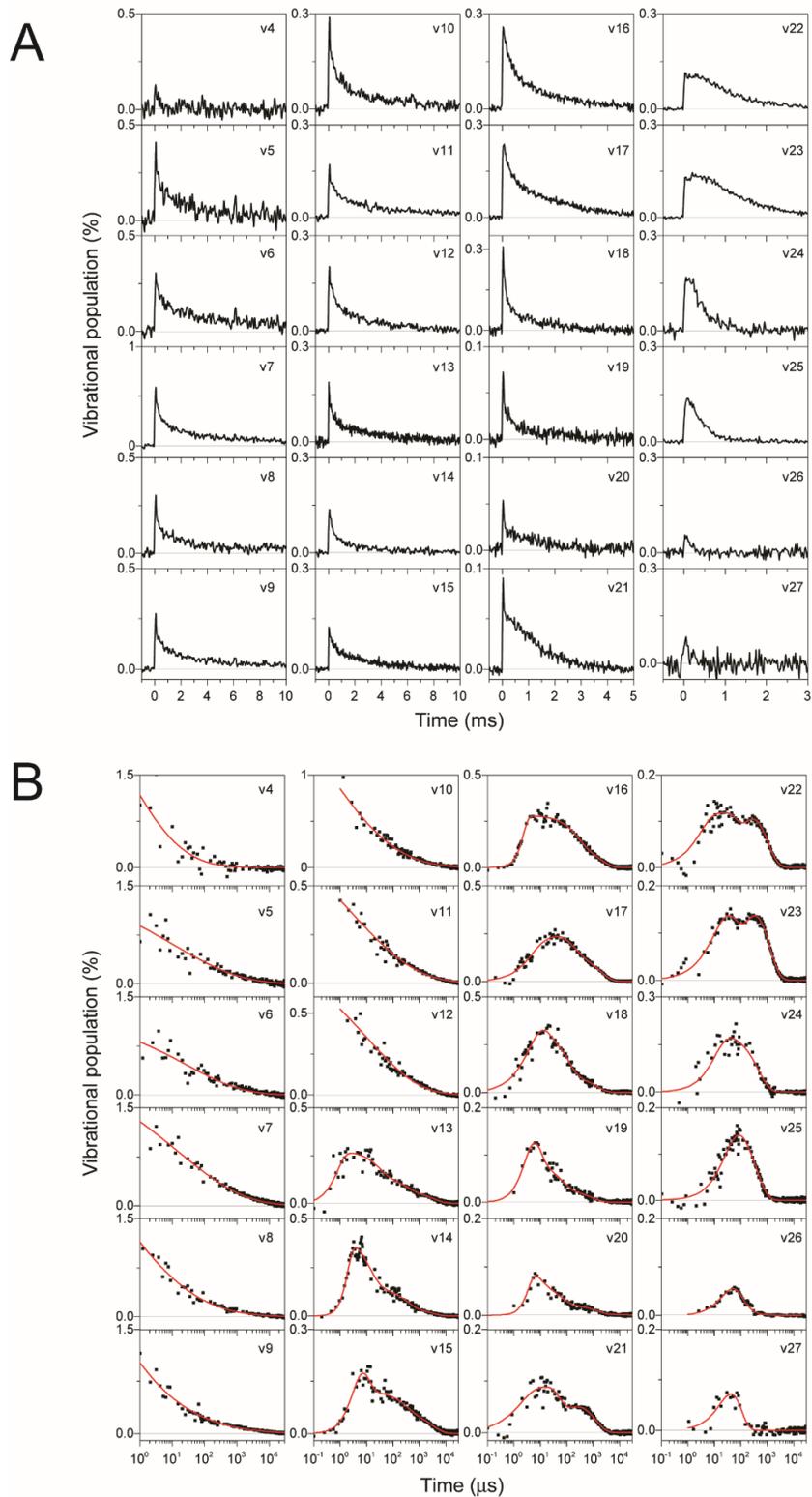
541 In our experiment, we do not observe any population in  $v=28$  or higher. The vibrational energy of  
542 CO ( $X^1\Sigma^+$ ,  $v=28$ ) is 6.01 eV, in close resonance with the vibrational ground state of the first  
543 electronic excited state (6.01 eV) of CO molecules in the gas phase. Thus, we assume a V-E energy  
544 loss channel in the kMC simulation. We set the corresponding rate constants to  $1\times 10^5 \text{ s}^{-1}$  for  
545 vibrationally excited states above  $v=27$ , which avoids accumulation of population in these states.

546

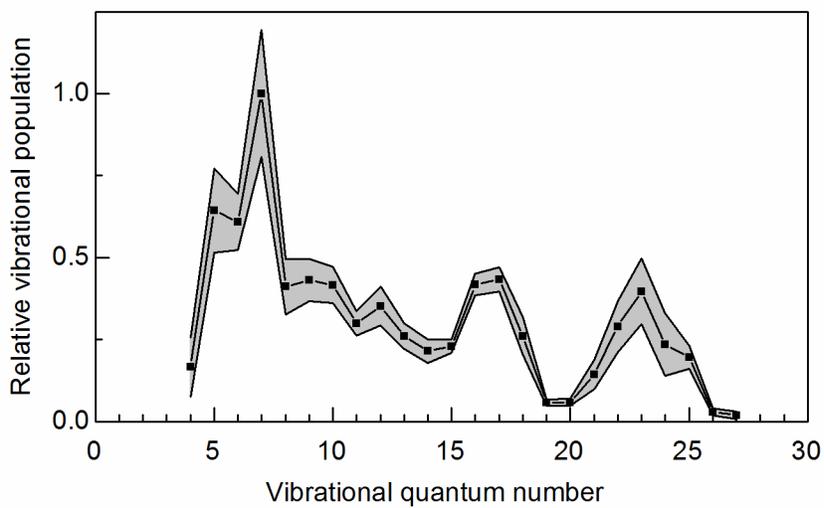


547 **Figure S1** Observed wavenumbers for CO overtone emissions ( $v \rightarrow v-2$ ) from a monolayer  $^{13}\text{C}^{18}\text{O}$  on NaCl  
548 (100), see Fig. 2 in the main manuscript. The solid line is a least-square fit to the data based on Eq. 2.  
549

550



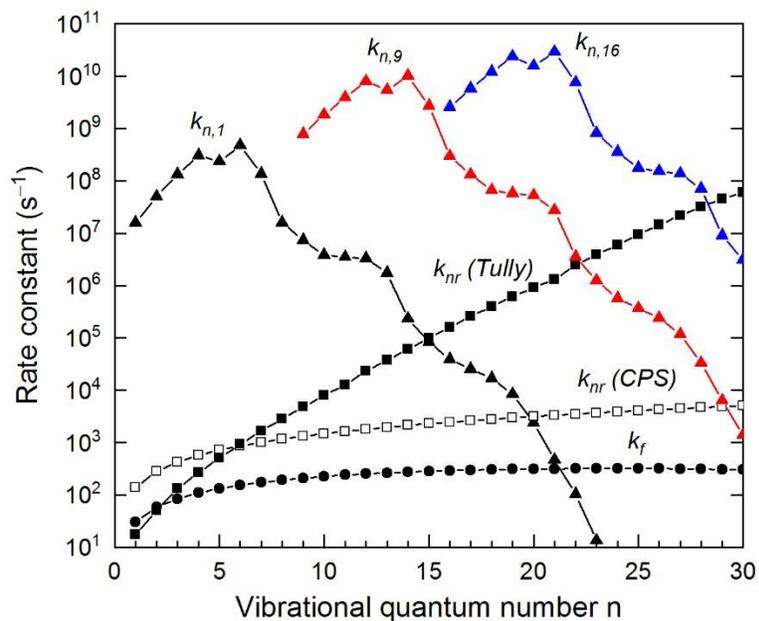
551  
 552 **Figure S2 | Temporal profiles of the CO monolayer overtone emission for the vibrational states 4-27**  
 553 **at 7 K.** Panel A and B show the temporal profiles on a linear and logarithmic time-scale, respectively. Note  
 554 the different time ranges for different vibrational states. The vibrational population shown on the y-axis is  
 555 calibrated according to Section E. Panel A: Temporal profiles are shown with a bin-time of 25  $\mu\text{s}$ . Panel B:  
 556 The bin-time increases with time. Red lines are empirical fits to the experimental data to guide the eye.  
 557



558

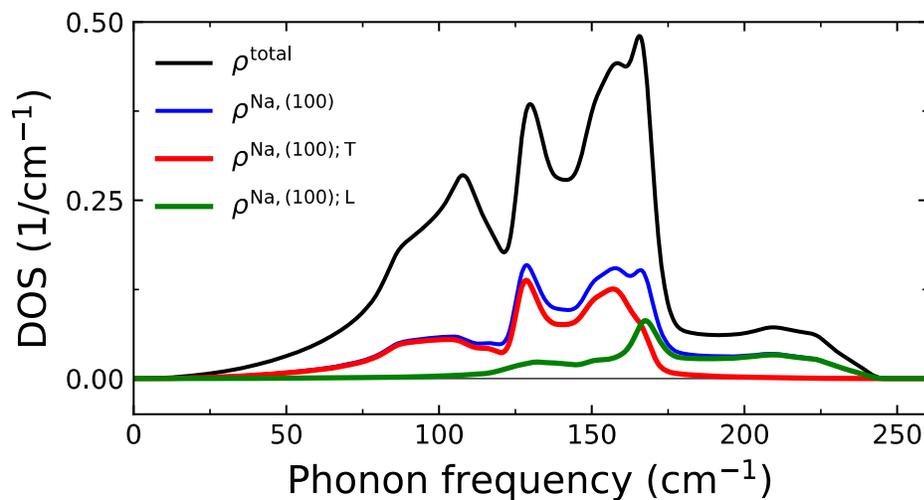
559 **Figure S3 | The relative vibrational population distribution of monolayer CO integrated over 0.05-**  
560 **1.05 ms (black dots). The grey shaded region represents the overall uncertainty.**

561



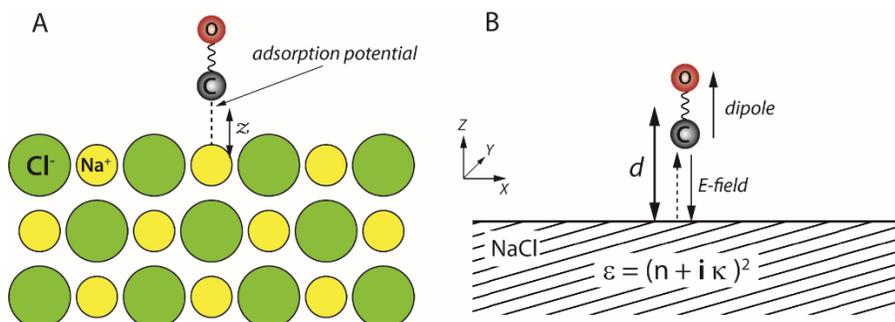
562  
 563 **Figure S4 | Rate constants calculated for the kMC simulations.** Shown are rate constants for single-  
 564 quanta processes: fluorescence (filled circles), nearest neighbor vibrational energy pooling  $\text{CO}(n) + \text{CO}(m)$   
 565  $\rightarrow \text{CO}(n+1) + \text{CO}(m-1)$  for selected states  $m=1, 9$  and  $16$  (triangles), and non-radiative relaxation for the  
 566 Tully (filled squares) and the CPS model (open squares). Note that the VEP rate constants depend strongly  
 567 on distance (see Section F.2 for details).

568



569  
 570 **Figure S5 | Phonon density of states (DOS) for bulk NaCl.** Shown are the total DOS (black solid line),  
 571 the DOS projected onto phonons which include Na-atom displacements in the (100) plane (blue) together  
 572 with its decomposition into transverse (T, red) and longitudinal (L, green) phonons as defined by Eq. 10-12  
 573 in the text. The DOSs are plotted as a function of phonon frequencies corresponding to the phonon excitation  
 574 energies  $E$ . The total DOS is normalized to 1, and the transverse and longitudinal projections sum up to to  
 575 the Na-atom-(100) projection.

576



578  
 579 **Figure S6 | Theoretical models for describing vibrational energy transfer of adsorbed CO molecules**  
 580 **to the solid NaCl substrate.** (A) Tully model: Vibrational energy flows by mechanical coupling of the CO  
 581 oscillator to the bulk NaCl phonon bath by anharmonic interaction through the C-Na<sup>+</sup> bond. (B) CPS model:  
 582 Vibrational energy flows from the molecule to the solid via the electromagnetic field emitted by the  
 583 oscillating CO dipole near the NaCl half-space with a complex frequency dependent dielectric constant.  
 584 Note that the CPS model is not defined in terms of atoms and forces between them.