

CPSC and USFA Sound Carbon Monoxide Alarm

CPSC and USFA News

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As Temperatures Drop, Potential for CO Poisonings and Deaths Rises

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Every year, winter storms leave carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning deaths in their path. As winter's coldest months arrive, with temperatures in some parts of the United States dipping below freezing, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) are sounding the CO alarm.

"January and February are prime months for winter weather-related power outages," said Acting CPSC Chairman Nancy Nord. "Tragically people are dying from carbon monoxide poisoning while trying to keep warm. Don't let this invisible killer into your home."

"The U.S. Fire Administration is pleased to join with the CPSC in sounding a national carbon monoxide alarm," said Acting U.S. Fire Administrator Charlie Dickinson. "There is no group of men and women in this nation that are as keenly aware of the deadliness of carbon monoxide, than firefighters. During times of lost power, it is our nation's firefighters who respond to the sad results of carbon monoxide poisoning when people use gas generators, camp stoves and charcoal grills in confined spaces. The USFA joins with all firefighters in reminding all residents of this nation to follow the CPSC recommendations below to protect themselves against exposure to carbon monoxide."

Carbon monoxide is an odorless and colorless poisonous gas. CPSC estimates about 140 people die each year from unintentional exposure to carbon monoxide associated with consumer products.

Consumers die when they improperly use gas generators, charcoal grills, and fuel-burning camping heaters and stoves inside their homes or in other enclosed or partially-enclosed spaces during power outages. They also die when furnaces that have not been professionally and annually inspected leak CO. CPSC staff is aware through police, medical examiner and news reports of at least 32 CO deaths related to portable generators from October 1 through December 31, 2006.

Reducing CO poisonings and deaths is a priority at CPSC. Yesterday, in an effort to stop consumers from using gasoline generators indoors, the Commission voted to require manufacturers to place a prominent "danger" label on all new generators and their packaging.

CPSC and USFA urge consumers to take these important steps to protect themselves against CO poisoning this winter:

- Never use portable generators inside homes or garages, even if doors and windows are open. Use generators outside only, far away from the home.
- Never bring a charcoal grill into the house for heating or cooking. Do not barbeque in the garage.
- Never use a gas range or oven for heating.
- Open the fireplace damper before lighting a fire and keep it open until the ashes are cool. An open damper may help prevent build-up of poisonous gases inside the home.
- Have home heating systems (including chimneys and vents) inspected and serviced annually by a trained service technician.
- Install battery-operated CO alarms or CO alarms with battery backup in your home outside separate sleeping areas.
- Know the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning: headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, sleepiness, and confusion. If you suspect CO poisoning, get outside to fresh air immediately, and then call 911.

Produced in conjunction with USFA, CPSC has a new television public service announcement (PSA) on CO hazards and a radio PSA.

To see this release on CPSC's web site, including links to the PSAs described above, please go to:

<http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/prereel/prhtml07/07075.html>



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