

Information Bulletin

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FEMA Urges Caution When Using Portable Generators

OFPC supports FEMA and the CPSC Urging Caution if the use of Portable Generators Becomes Necessary

WASHINGTON – The Department of Homeland Security’s Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has joined with the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) in issuing a warning to consumers confronted by the recent winter weather. When there’s a power outage, exercise caution when using portable generators.

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an invisible killer. You can’t see or smell it. A generator’s exhaust contains poisonous CO which can kill you in a matter of minutes.

Last year, at least 65 people died from generator-related CO poisoning. Many of the deaths occurred after winter storms knocked out power.

Follow these important generator safety tips:

- Never use a portable generator inside a home, garage, shed or other partially enclosed space, even if doors and windows are open.
- Place portable generators outside only, far away from the home. And keep the generator away from openings to the home, including doors, windows and vents.
- Read the label on the generator and the owner’s manual, and follow the instructions.
- Install CO alarms with battery backup in the home outside each sleeping area.
- Get to fresh air immediately if you start to feel sick, weak or dizzy. CO poisoning from exposure to generator exhaust can quickly lead to incapacitation and death.

Last year, CPSC mandated a new danger label (<http://www.cpsc.gov/generator.html>) on generators manufactured after May 14, 2007. The label states that, “Using a generator indoors CAN KILL YOU IN MINUTES.”

FEMA and CPSC also caution people to never use charcoal for cooking in the home. Every year individuals lose their lives attempting to cook with charcoal when power is out. Charcoal fires should only be used outside of the home.

For more information, please visit these pages on the CPSC and U.S. Fire Administration Web sites:

- Generator Danger Warning <http://www.cpsc.gov/generator.html>
- What to Know: Generators and CO <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/468.html>
- New Danger Label Required on All Portable Generators <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/prrel/prhtml07/07074.html>
- Carbon Monoxide and Portable Generator Hazards http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/citizens/all_citizens/co/index.shtm

FEMA coordinates the federal government's role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terror.

Here is a link to the OFPC Safety Pamphlet on CO: <http://www.dos.state.ny.us/fire/pdfs/brochures/CarbMonox.pdf>



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