



CPSC and USFA News



U.S. Consumer Product
Safety Commission
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United States
Fire Administration
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Hurricane Isaac Warning: Keep Generators Outside and Far Away from Homes **CPSC and USFA Warn Carbon Monoxide from Generators Can Kill**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) are warning consumers to be vigilant when using portable generators to deal with power outages after Hurricane Isaac.

The exhaust from gasoline-powered generators contains high levels of poisonous carbon monoxide (CO) that can quickly incapacitate and kill within minutes. Generators should only be used outside, far away from homes. Never run a generator inside a house, basement, garage, shed or near windows or vents to your house or a neighbor's house.

CPSC is aware of at least 755 CO deaths involving generators between 1999 and 2011. Many generator CO deaths occur in the aftermath of natural disasters such as hurricanes.

"Our message is that these deaths are preventable," said CPSC Chairman Inez Tenenbaum. "Where you run a generator can make the difference between life and death. The only safe place to operate a generator is outside in open air, placed far from your home, not in a garage or any enclosed space."

"Portable generators are useful when electric power is needed, but they can be very hazardous when installed or used improperly," said U.S. Fire Administrator Ernie Mitchell. "The hazards may include damaged electrical systems, carbon monoxide poisoning, electrocution, and fire. Carefully follow manufacturer recommendations for installation and use. Also, consult electrical experts to ensure installation meets local building codes."

In addition to using a generator outside and far away from the home, CPSC and USFA offer these generator safety tips:

- Read both the label on the generator and in the owner's manual and follow the instructions.
- Use heavy-duty extension cords that are specifically designed for outdoor use with the generator. Extension cords should be free of damage.
- Extension cords that are long enough to allow the generator to be placed outdoors and far away from windows, doors and vents to the home or to other structures that could be occupied.
- If you start to feel sick, dizzy, or weak while using a generator, get to fresh air RIGHT AWAY. DO NOT DELAY. CO from generators can kill you in minutes.
- Install battery-operated CO alarms or plug-in CO alarms with battery back-up on every level of the home and outside sleeping areas and according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Generators pose a risk of shock and electrocution, especially if they are operated in wet conditions. Operate the generator under an open, canopy-like structure on a dry surface where water cannot reach it or puddle or drain under it.
- NEVER try to power the house wiring by plugging the generator into a wall outlet, a practice known as "backfeeding." This is extremely dangerous and presents an electrocution risk to utility workers and neighbors served by the same utility transformer.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is charged with protecting the public from unreasonable risks of injury or death associated with the use of the thousands of consumer products under the agency's jurisdiction. Deaths, injuries, and property damage from consumer product incidents cost the nation more than \$900 billion annually. CPSC is committed to protecting consumers and families from products that pose a fire, electrical, chemical, or mechanical hazard. CPSC's work to ensure the safety of consumer products - such as toys, cribs, power tools, cigarette lighters and household chemicals - contributed to a decline in the rate of deaths and injuries associated with consumer products over the past 30 years.

To report a dangerous product or a product-related injury, go online to: SaferProducts.gov, call CPSC's Hotline at (800) 638-2772 or teletypewriter at (301) 595-7054 for the hearing and speech impaired. Consumers can obtain this news release and product safety information at www.cpsc.gov. To join a free e-mail subscription list, please go to www.cpsc.gov/cpsclist.aspx.

