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## Be Safe When Using A Portable Generator

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DES MOINES, Iowa -- Flood victims often die after floodwaters are gone - from using electric generators.

The primary hazards when using a generator are carbon monoxide poisoning from the toxic engine exhaust, electric shock or electrocution, and fire. Here are tips for safely using generators:

- *Follow the instructions that come with your generator. **Never use a generator indoors or in partially enclosed spaces**, including homes, garages, basements and crawl spaces - even those with partial ventilation. **Never run a generator in areas where people or animals are present.** Opening doors and windows or using fans will not prevent carbon monoxide build-up in the home. Place the generator away from open windows.*
- *Don't assume that you are safe. Carbon monoxide fumes emitted by gasoline engines can be fatal, often without the victims - especially those who are sleeping - ever realizing the danger. **You cannot smell or see carbon monoxide. So even if you do not smell exhaust fumes, you may be exposed. If you start to feel sick, dizzy, or weak while using a generator, get to fresh air immediately.** The carbon monoxide from generators can rapidly lead to full incapacitation and death. If you experience serious symptoms, get medical attention right away and inform medical staff that carbon monoxide poisoning is suspected. If the symptoms occurred while indoors, call the fire department to determine if it is safe to re-enter the building.*
- *Install carbon monoxide alarms inside your home to warn when carbon monoxide levels from any source pose a serious health risk. Follow the manufacturer's recommended placement.*
- *Always connect the generator to the appliances with heavy-duty extension cords. Hooking up your generator directly into your home power supply could energize the outside power lines and potentially injure or electrocute an unwary utility lineman. It also bypasses some of the built-in household circuit protection devices. **If you must connect the generator through the house wiring to power appliances, use a qualified electrician to install the appropriate equipment in accordance with local electrical codes.** Or, ask your utility company to install an appropriate power transfer switch.*
- *Never store fuel for your generator in your house. Gasoline, propane, kerosene, and other flammable liquids should be stored outside of living areas in properly labeled, non-glass safety containers. Do not store them near a fuel-burning appliance, such as a natural gas water heater in a garage. If the fuel is spilled or the container is not sealed properly, invisible vapors from the fuel can travel along the ground and be ignited by the appliance's pilot light or by arcs from electric switches in the appliance. **Before refueling the generator, turn it off and let it cool down.** Gasoline spilled on hot engine parts could ignite, and invisible vapors from the fuel can travel along the ground and be ignited by the generator's pilot light or by arcs from electric switches in the appliance.*

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.

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