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Know the Dangers of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning from Portable Electric Generators

The Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFi) announce their recommendations and safety tips for proper use of portable electric generators to ensure homeowner and community safety this year.

Portable electric generators provide a good source of power, but if these generators are improperly installed or operated, can become deadly. "Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless poison gas. It is an invisible killer," said Brett Brenner, President of ESFi. "While generators can come in handy after a storm, using one indoors can kill you and your family in minutes."

Opening doors and windows or operating fans to ventilate will not prevent CO build-up in the home. Even with a CO alarm, you should never use a gasoline-powered generator inside your home or in a garage. These precautions can help keep you and your family safe from carbon monoxide poisoning from portable electric generators during and after disasters:

- Contact a licensed electrician to install your generator to make sure it meets local codes. Do not connect generators directly to household wiring without an appropriate transfer switch installed. Power from generators connected directly to household wiring can backfeed along power lines and electrocute anyone coming in contact with them, including lineworkers making repairs.
- Make sure your generator is properly grounded.
- Keep the generator dry.
- Make sure extension cords used with generators are rated for the load, and are free of cuts, worn insulation, and have three-pronged plugs.
- Do not overload the generator. A portable generator should be used only when necessary, and only to power essential equipment or appliances.
- Never operate the generator in enclosed or partially enclosed spaces. Use carbon monoxide detectors in nearby enclosed spaces to monitor levels. Generators can produce high levels of carbon monoxide very quickly, which can be deadly.
- Use a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) to help prevent electrocutions and electrical shock injuries.
- Make sure fuel for the generator is stored safely, away from living areas, in properly labeled containers, and away from fuel-burning appliances. Before re-fueling, always turn the generator off and let it cool down.
- Turn off all appliances powered by the generator before shutting down the generator.
- Keep children away from portable generators at all times.

Founded in 1994 through a joint effort between Underwriters Laboratories Inc. (UL), the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and the National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA), the Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFi) is North America's only non-profit organization dedicated exclusively to promoting electrical safety in the home and workplace.

For additional electrical safety information, visit the Foundation's Web site at www.electrical-safety.org or call 703-841-3229.