

The New Jersey Poison Information & Education System — Serving New Jersey Since 1983

## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

### **Poisonings Happen During and After Storms** Gas Generators Produce Toxic Carbon Monoxide Gas

**Warning: Using a gas generator indoors can cause death from exposure to toxic carbon monoxide (CO) gas. This deadly gas can build up quickly inside your home, poisoning those inside including pets. The state’s poison control center is warning residents of the risk of CO poisoning during and after bad weather.**

**(New Jersey)** – A storm is expected for New Jersey. Dangerous weather can bring heavy rain, intense/damaging winds, flash flooding, and power outages. Many people use gas generators to keep the power on. Gas-powered equipment, including generators, pressure washers, grills, camping stoves, and vehicles, produce deadly carbon monoxide and should never be used indoors. To prevent carbon monoxide poisoning, keep gas generators outdoors more than 20 feet away from your home and your neighbors’ homes — including doors, windows, and vents.

“Carbon monoxide gas is deadly and people are often exposed to it during and after intense storms,” says Bruce Ruck, managing director of the [New Jersey Poison Control Center](#) at [Rutgers New Jersey Medical School](#). “Carbon monoxide gas gives no warning which is why it’s important to have working detectors in your home. Listen to your CO detector if it sounds its alarm, it’s trying to save your life.”

Recognize the signs and symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning and act quickly. Early symptoms of CO poisoning can be confused with symptoms of viral illnesses like the common cold, seasonal flu, and COVID-19 (headache, dizziness, weakness, upset stomach, vomiting, chest pain and confusion).

It is unsafe to idle your car in the garage even with the garage door open. If you need to charge your phone, pull your vehicle completely out of the garage with the tailpipe/exhaust facing away from the home. Dangerous levels of CO can build up quickly in your home, apartment, or vehicle, poisoning those inside including pets.

“Every minute counts in situations involving carbon monoxide gas,” says Ruck. “Call the poison center if you think you or someone was exposed to carbon monoxide, 1-800-222-1222. If someone is not breathing, hard to wake up, or having a seizure, call 9-1-1.”

**If you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning, get help immediately:**

1. If someone is unconscious or unresponsive, get them out of the house and call 9-1-1 immediately.
2. Leave the house or building right away. Do not waste time opening windows. This will delay your escape and cause you to breathe in even more dangerous fumes.
3. Contact your local fire department or energy provider.
4. Call the NJ Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222 for immediate treatment advice. Do not waste time looking for information on the internet about carbon monoxide poisoning. Call the poison center for fast, free and accurate information.

### **Safety tips to help reduce your risk of carbon monoxide exposure during storms:**

#### **Outdoors**

- Generators should only be used outside.
- Keep generators more than 20 feet from both your home and your neighbors' homes. This includes keeping generators away from doors, windows, and vents. [Generator Safety Tips](#)
- Use pressure washers, grills, camp stoves, or other gasoline, propane, natural gas or charcoal-burning devices outdoors only. It is never safe to use them inside your home, basement, garage, carport, camper, boat cabin, or tent.

#### **Indoors**

- Carbon monoxide detectors should be on every level of your home, including near sleeping areas.
- Check to make sure your CO detectors are working. If detectors are old or not working properly, replace them.
- Keeping a car running in a garage is extremely dangerous. Carbon monoxide gas can quickly build up inside the garage even with the garage door open.
- Be careful with "remote start" engines which may turn on without you knowing it.

If you think someone was exposed to carbon monoxide, contact your local poison control center immediately. Medical specialists are available to provide information, answer questions, and provide emergency support 24 hours a day. Anyone can call for medical help – children, teens, and adults. Poison control centers are a medical resource for both the public and healthcare providers.

**Call the NJ Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222 or [Chat Here](#)**

**If someone is not breathing, hard to wake up, or having a seizure, call 9-1-1**