

Portable Generators

When a member of your community dies from carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning as the result of improper generator use, it is important to let others know how they can prevent a similar tragedy. As you continue to report on the incident, the U.S. Fire Administration encourages you to remind your audience that many CO deaths are preventable.

Portable generators are useful when temporary or remote electric power is needed but they can be hazardous. The primary hazards to avoid when using them are carbon monoxide poisoning, electric shock or electrocution, and fire. The U.S. Fire Administration and the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) offer the following life-saving tips that could make a big difference to your audience. By incorporating them in your story now, while the moment is still fresh, you could help save a life.

Did you know?

- From 1990-2003, 228 carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning deaths were associated with portable generators, as reported to the CPSC.
- From 2001 to 2003, the number of reported CO poisoning deaths associated with portable generators doubled.
- The most common improper placement of portable generators that result in injury or death are in: crawl spaces, basements, and attached garages (within or in close proximity to the home).

Following these simple generator safety tips can boost survival rates dramatically. Please share them with your readers because knowledge is the best protection.

Portable Generator Life-Saving Tips

- Always use generators outdoors, away from doors, windows and vents. NEVER use generators inside homes, garages, basements, crawl spaces, or other enclosed or partially enclosed areas, even with ventilation.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for use.
- Install battery-operated or plug-in (with battery backup) carbon monoxide alarms in your home, following the manufacturer's instructions.
- Test CO detectors often and replace batteries when needed.
- Keep the generator dry. Use on a dry surface under an open, canopy-like structure.
- Dry your hands before touching the generator.
- Plug appliances directly into the generator or use a heavy-duty outdoor-rated extension cord. Make sure the entire extension cord is free of cuts or tears and the plug has all 3 prongs, especially a grounding pin.
- NEVER plug the generator into a wall outlet (known as back-feeding). This practice can cause an electrocution risk to utility workers and others served by the same utility transformer.

- If you must connect a generator to house wiring, have a qualified electrician install appropriate equipment. Your utility company may be able to install an appropriate transfer switch as well.
- Before refueling the generator, turn it off and let it cool. Fuel spilled on hot engine parts could ignite.
- Always store fuel outside of living areas in properly labeled, non-glass containers.
- Store fuel away from any fuel-burning appliance.

For more information on the U.S. Fire Administration's Public Education Campaigns or to speak with a USFA spokesperson, please call 202-842-3600. Also visit <http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/> or <http://www.firesafety.gov/> for additional information on fire safety.