



**Department of Health**  
140 County Highway 33W  
Suite 3  
Cooperstown, NY 13326  
Phone: (607) 547-6483  
Fax: (607) 547-4385

## **NEWS RELEASE – December**

### **Safe Generator Use**

As the winter season approaches and the temperatures drop, New Yorkers must prepare for the possibility of severe storms and the power outages that can result. Power outages cause a number of safety concerns, especially when those affected seek heat from other sources.

The Otsego County Department of Health says: Portable generators can be an effective energy source during a power outage, but using them safely is key. Always read the directions that come with the device.

The following tips will help you use your generator safely:

- Make sure your generator produces more power than will be drawn by the things you connect to it.
- Determine the amount of power you will need. Light bulb wattage indicates the power needed; appliance and equipment labels indicate their power requirements. If you can't determine the amount of power you will need, ask an electrician.
- Plug appliances directly into the generator, or use a heavy duty, outdoor-rated extension cord that is rated (in watts or amps) at least equal to the sum of the connected appliance loads. Never try to power your house by plugging the generator into a wall outlet
- Turn the generator off and let it cool before refueling. Gasoline spilled on hot engine parts could ignite.
- Store generator fuel in an approved safety can outside of living areas. Local laws may restrict use or storage of fuel. Ask your local fire department for information.
- If you spill fuel, or do not seal containers properly, invisible vapors can travel along the ground and be ignited by an appliance's pilot light.
- Use the type of fuel recommended in the generator instructions or on its label.

Most generators are gasoline powered and during operation, produce carbon monoxide, (CO) a colorless, odorless gas. When inhaled, the gas reduces your ability to utilize oxygen. Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include headache, nausea and tiredness that can lead to unconsciousness and may be life-threatening.

To avoid carbon monoxide exposure:

- Never use a generator indoors, including in homes, garages, basements, crawl spaces, and other enclosed or partially enclosed areas, even with ventilation. Opening doors and windows or using fans will not prevent carbon dioxide build-up in the home.
- Locate the unit outdoors on a dry surface, away from doors, windows, vents, and air conditioning equipment that could allow carbon dioxide to come indoors.
- Install battery-operated carbon dioxide alarms or plug-in carbon dioxide alarms with battery back-up in your home, according to the manufacturer's installation instructions. Test your carbon dioxide alarms frequently and replace dead batteries.

Remember that you cannot see or smell carbon dioxide and portable generators can produce high levels very quickly. If you start to feel sick, dizzy, or weak while using a generator, get to fresh air immediately. If you have a poisoning emergency, call your local New York Poison Information Center. If the victim has collapsed or is not breathing, call 911 immediately.

For more information on safe generator use, call the Otsego County Department of Health at 607-547-4230 or visit the New York State Department of Health's web site at [www.nyhealth.gov](http://www.nyhealth.gov) to order the publication, "Don't Be Left in the Dark."

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