



United States
**CONSUMER PRODUCT
SAFETY COMMISSION**

How to Protect Your Family from CO Poisoning and Other Post-Storm Dangers this Hurricane Season

Release Date: May 18, 2023

WASHINGTON, D.C. – June 1 marks the start of the 2023 Atlantic hurricane season. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is warning consumers about the increased risk of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning, fires and electric shock after hurricanes and severe storms hit.

“Hurricanes and major storms in the U.S. have increased in frequency and severity in recent years. This hurricane season may bring widespread destruction that could impact millions of Americans,” said CPSC Chair Alex Hoehn-Saric. “I urge consumers to follow CPSC’s safety tips to prepare ahead of storms to prevent loss of life in a storm’s aftermath.”

Consumers need to be especially careful when storms knock out electrical power. CO poisoning from gasoline-powered portable generators can kill in minutes. CO is called the invisible killer because it is colorless and odorless. CO poisoning from portable generators can happen so quickly that exposed persons may become unconscious before recognizing the symptoms of nausea, dizziness or weakness.

An average of nearly 100 consumers die in the U.S. each year from CO poisoning from portable generators, according to CPSC’s latest report on

[Non-Fire Carbon Monoxide Deaths Associated with the Use of Consumer Products.](#)

CPSC data show African Americans are at higher risk of death

An earlier [CPSC report](#) shows that from 2011 through 2021, where race was known, non-Hispanic Black or African Americans accounted for 23 percent of generator-related CO deaths, which is much higher than their share in the U.S. population.

Consumers should follow these safety tips to protect their families during hurricane season. The Atlantic hurricane season typically lasts from the beginning of June to the end of November.

Loss of Power—Using a Generator Safely

- NEVER operate a portable generator inside a home, garage, basement, crawlspace or shed. Opening doors or windows does not provide enough ventilation to prevent the buildup of lethal levels of CO.
- Operate portable generators outside only, at least 20 feet away from the house, and direct the generator's exhaust away from the home and any other buildings that someone could enter, while keeping windows and other openings closed in the path of the generator's exhaust. Do not operate a generator on an outside porch or in a carport. They are too close to the home.
- Follow portable generator instructions about electrical shock hazards in inclement weather, which may include use of an NFPA-rated non-combustible generator tent or may state to wait until rain passes.
- Check that portable generators have been maintained properly, and read and follow the labels, instructions, and warnings on the generator and in the owner's manual.
- Look for portable generators that have a CO shut-off safety feature, which is designed to shut the generator off automatically when high levels of CO are present around the generator. These models may be

advertised as certified to the latest safety standards for portable generators—PGMA G300-2018 and UL 2201—which are estimated to reduce deaths from CO poisoning by 87% and 100%, respectively. UL 2201 certified models have reduced CO emissions in addition to the CO shut-off feature.

Check CO and Smoke Alarms

- Working smoke and CO alarms save lives! Install battery-operated CO alarms or CO alarms with battery backup on each level and outside separate sleeping areas at home. Interconnected CO alarms are best; when one sounds, they all sound.
- Make sure smoke alarms are installed on every level and inside each bedroom at home.
- Test CO and smoke alarms monthly to make sure they are working properly and replace batteries, if needed. Never ignore an alarm when it sounds. Get outside immediately. Then call 911.

Dangers with Charcoal and Candles

- Never use charcoal indoors. Burning charcoal in an enclosed space can produce lethal levels of carbon monoxide. Do not cook on a charcoal grill in a garage, even with the garage door open.
- Use caution when burning candles. Use flashlights or battery-operated candles instead. If using candles, do not burn them on or near anything that can catch fire. Never leave burning candles unattended. Extinguish candles when leaving the room and before sleeping.

Dangers with Wet Appliances:

- Look for signs that your appliances have gotten wet. Do not touch wet appliances that are still plugged into an electrical source.
- Before using your appliances, have a professional or your gas or electric company evaluate them for safety. Replace all gas control valves, electrical wiring, circuit breakers and fuses that have been under water.

Dangers with Gas Leaks:

- If you smell or hear gas leaking, leave your home immediately and contact local gas authorities from outside the home. Do not operate any electronics, such as lights or phone, before leaving.

CPSC resources:

[PSA – Hurricane Safety Tips \(English\)](#)

[PSA – Hurricane Safety Tips \(Spanish\)](#)

[Carbon Monoxide Safety Center](#)

Link to broadcast quality video for media:

Hurricane B-Roll - <https://spaces.hightail.com/space/XtFQ7YqK0x>

CPSC spokespeople are available for interviews. Email nnye@cpsc.gov or call 240-204-4410 to arrange for an interview.

Individual Commissioners may have statements related to this topic. Please visit www.cpsc.gov/commissioners to search for statements related to this or other topics.

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About the U.S. CPSC

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is charged with protecting the public from unreasonable risk of injury or death associated with the use of thousands of types of consumer products. Deaths, injuries, and property damage from consumer product-related incidents cost the nation more than \$1 trillion annually. CPSC's work to ensure the safety of consumer products has contributed to a decline in the rate of injuries associated with consumer products over the past 50 years.

Federal law prohibits any person from selling products subject to a Commission ordered recall or a voluntary recall undertaken in consultation with the CPSC.

For lifesaving information:

- Visit [CPSC.gov](https://www.cpsc.gov).
- Sign up to receive our [e-mail alerts](#).
- Follow us on [Facebook](#), Instagram [@USCPSC](#) and Twitter [@USCPSC](#).
- Report a dangerous product or a product-related injury on www.SaferProducts.gov.
- Call CPSC's Hotline at 800-638-2772 (TTY 301-595-7054).
- Contact a [media specialist](#).

Media Contact

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