

Carbon Monoxide Strikes Again NJ Poison Control Center Warns Residents

Warning: Bringing a gas generator indoors can cause death from exposure to carbon monoxide (CO) gas. The State's Poison Control Center is warning residents this morning after the latest New Jersey incident involving one death and another hospitalized for CO poisoning.

(New Jersey, NJ) – CO is a poisonous gas that gives no warning since you can't see it, smell it, hear it, or taste it. This gas is impossible to detect if you do not have working carbon monoxide detectors inside your living space. Check your CO detectors to make sure the batteries and the unit are working. If you suspect CO poisoning, handle it as a medical emergency.

Each year, New Jersey residents are hospitalized and even die from exposure to carbon monoxide. Carbon monoxide is an extremely dangerous and potentially deadly poison gas produced by generators, stoves, furnaces, and other fuel burning appliances/equipment. It is important to recognize the signs and symptoms of CO poisoning and to act quickly! Early symptoms of CO poisoning are similar to symptoms of the common cold, seasonal flu, strep throat, and COVID-19 (headache, dizziness, weakness, upset stomach, vomiting, chest pain, and confusion).

"Multiple recent storms, with high snow totals, gusting winds, and power outages, have caused an uptick in poison exposures to a variety of substances," says Diane Calello, executive and medical director of the [New Jersey Poison Control Center](#) at [Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, Department of Emergency Medicine](#). "Not surprisingly, deadly carbon monoxide gas tops the list."

Stopping carbon monoxide gas from building up inside your living space or car is the best way to prevent dangerous health effects. "With power outages being reported in New Jersey and another storm on the way, please make sure portable generators are used outdoors only and kept more than 20 feet from the home," says Calello.

Below are key safety tips to lower your risk of CO exposure/poisoning during winter storms.

Outdoors

- Generators should only be used outside. Keep generators more than 20 feet from both you and your neighbor's home, doors, or windows. Carbon monoxide gas can come into a home or building if the generator is too close. [Generator safety tips](#)
- Clear snow blocking/around your heating system, dryer, and other appliance vents, intakes, and exhausts.
- Gas and other fuel-burning appliances must have adequate ventilation. If ventilation is not great where these appliances are located, keep a window slightly cracked to allow airflow.
- Do not idle a car in a snowbank. If stuck in the snow, make sure to clear the tailpipe and surrounding area to prevent exhaust fumes from entering the car.
- Make sure flues are open before starting a fire in your fireplace.

Indoors

- If you do not have battery-operated or battery back-up CO detectors in your living area, install them right away. If you have detectors, make sure the batteries and the units are working. If the detectors are old and/or not working properly, replace them.

- You must not use your stove or oven to heat your living space. Doing so can cause dangerous levels of carbon monoxide gas to build up inside your home or apartment.
- Generators, pressure washers, grills, camp stoves, or other fuel-burning equipment should not be used indoors for any reason.
- Keeping a car running in a closed garage is extremely dangerous. Once you pull in, immediately turn off the engine to prevent carbon monoxide gas from building up inside your home.

If you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning, get help immediately:

1. If someone is unconscious or unresponsive, get him or her 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/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.

Your local poison control center is a great resource for information and emergencies related to carbon monoxide and other potential poisoning exposures. New Jersey residents can reach their poison control center, 24/7: Call (1-800-222-1222); Text (973-339-0702); Chat via [website](#). If someone is unconscious, not breathing, hard to wake up, or having a seizure; call 9-1-1.

Help is Just a Phone Call Away!