



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Public Health
250 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02108-4619

DEVAL L. PATRICK
GOVERNOR

TIMOTHY P. MURRAY
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

JUDYANN BIGBY, MD
SECRETARY

JOHN AUERBACH
COMMISSIONER

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FURTHER INFORMATION:
Jennifer Manley,
DPH (617) 624-5195
Peter Judge,
MEMA (508) 820-2002

**PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY:
STATE HEALTH OFFICIALS WARN RESIDENTS OF CARBON MONOXIDE AND
ELECTRICAL HAZARDS FOLLOWING WINTER STORM**

BOSTON – Many residents who have lost power following this weekend’s snowstorm are seeking alternative sources of heat and electricity in their homes. These residents are urged to take extreme caution to avoid injury or death from carbon monoxide poisoning and electrical hazards during this time.

Carbon Monoxide (CO) Hazard from Portable Generators, Gas Stoves and Charcoal

The operation of gasoline, oil or other combustible fuel electrical generators produces carbon monoxide which *poses an extreme health hazard* if used indoors without proper ventilation.

The use of gas stoves and charcoal as a heat source *is not recommended* since both also produce carbon monoxide that is not vented properly outdoors.

NEVER use a generator inside homes, garages, crawlspaces, sheds, or similar areas, even when using fans or opening doors and windows for ventilation. Deadly levels of carbon monoxide can quickly build up in these areas and can linger for hours, even after the generator has shut off. Carbon monoxide can cause severe injury or death if exhaust from operating electrical generators is not vented properly.

Follow the instructions that come with your generator. Locate the unit outdoors and far from doors, windows, and vents that could allow CO to come indoors.

If you start to feel sick, dizzy, or weak while using a generator, get to fresh air **RIGHT AWAY. DO NOT DELAY.** The CO from generators *can rapidly kill you.*

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Massachusetts residents are reminded that state law requires the installation of battery-operated CO alarms or plug-in CO alarms with battery back-up in every home, according to the manufacturer's instructions. CO alarms should be certified to the requirements of the latest safety standards (UL 2034, IAS 6-96, or CSA 6.19.01).

Electrical Hazards

Generators also pose a risk of shock and electrocution, especially if they are operated in wet conditions. If you must use a generator when it is wet outside, protect the generator from moisture to help avoid the shock/electrocution hazard, but do so without operating the generator indoors or near openings to any building that can be occupied in order to help avoid the CO hazard. Operate the generator under an open, canopy-like structure on a dry surface where water cannot reach it or puddle or drain under it. If your hands are wet, dry them before touching the generator.

Connect appliances to the generator using heavy-duty extension cords that are specifically designed for outdoor use. Make sure the wattage rating for each cord exceeds the total wattage of all appliances connected to it. Use extension cords that are long enough to allow the generator to be placed outdoors and far away from windows, doors and vents to the home or to other structures that could be occupied. Check that the entire length of each cord is free of cuts or tears and that the plug has all three prongs. Protect the cord from getting pinched or crushed if it passes through a window or doorway.

NEVER try to power the house wiring by plugging the generator into a wall outlet, a practice known as "backfeeding." This is extremely dangerous and presents an electrocution risk to utility workers and neighbors served by the same utility transformer. It also bypasses some of the built-in household circuit protection devices.

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