



## Health Alert Network Message 21-67: Generator Use Safety

**Origination Date:**  
*September 8, 2021*

**Revision Dates (List All Revision Dates):**

### Louisiana Department of Health Urges Safe Use of Generators

Hurricane Ida has caused widespread power outages. Because of these outages, many people have turned to individual, gas-powered generators to power their homes. It is important that anyone choosing to use a generator do so safely. Using a generator safely is a matter of life and death and many people are killed or hospitalized due to improper and unsafe use of generators.

The Louisiana Department of Health urges residents to read all instructions accompanying their generator and to follow these safety tips to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning:

- Portable generators should never be used indoors. This includes use inside a garage, carport, basement, crawl space, or other enclosed or partially enclosed area, even those with ventilation. Gas-powered generators produce an exhaust of carbon monoxide (CO), which is odorless and colorless. CO inhalation can rapidly lead to full incapacitation or death. Opening windows or doors or using fans will not prevent the build-up of CO.
- If you start to feel sick, dizzy or weak while using a generator, get to fresh air IMMEDIATELY.
- Be sure to place the generator away from doors, windows and vents that could allow CO to come indoors.
- Use a carbon monoxide alarm in your home, either battery operated or plug-in with battery back-up. If CO gas from the generator enters your home and poses a health risk, the alarm will sound to warn you. Test the battery frequently and replace when needed.
- Keep the generator dry and do not use in rain or wet conditions. Protect the generator from moisture by operating it on a dry surface under an open canopy-like structure, such as a tarp held up on poles.
- Always ensure that your hands are dry before touching a generator.
- Turn off the generator and let cool before refueling. Gasoline spilled on hot engine parts could ignite. Fuel for generators should be stored in an approved safety can.
- Plug appliances directly into the generator or use a heavy-duty outdoor extension cord. The extension cord should be rated (in watts or amps) at least equal to the sum of the connected appliance loads. Check that the entire cord is free of cuts or tears and that the cord has all three prongs, and especially a grounding pin.
- Never try to power the house wiring by plugging the generator into a wall outlet. It's 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 protection devices.
- Be careful with your fuel: Use the type of fuel recommended in the instructions or on the generator's label. Local laws may restrict the amount of fuel you may store, or the storage location.
- Fuel should be stored outside of living areas in a locked shed or other protected area away from fuel-burning appliances, such as a natural gas water heater in a garage.
- If the fuel is spilled or the container is not properly sealed, invisible vapors from the fuel can travel along the ground or can be ignited by the appliance's pilot light or by arcs from electric switches in the appliance.

Always practice proper care and safety when using a generator. If you have questions about the operation of your generator, consult your owner's manual or call the manufacturer.

If you think you or someone else has been exposed to carbon monoxide, move the person into fresh air and call your doctor or healthcare provider. If someone has been electrocuted, call 911 for emergency care instructions.