



## American Association of Poison Control Centers

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# NEWS RELEASE

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### **Poison Centers Issue Safety Alert for Portable Generator Use Following Hurricane Sandy**

ALEXANDRIA, VA – America’s poison centers are urging people in the path of Hurricane Sandy to exercise caution when using portable generators to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.

According to the experts at America’s 57 local poison centers, carbon monoxide poisoning is the most common poison-related cause of hospitalization and death in the wake of hurricanes. It is called a “silent killer” because there are no odors or symptoms that signal a problem. When people use generators improperly – too close to homes, in garages or outside bedroom windows – carbon monoxide can seep in and sicken or even kill. Open windows or outside garage doors do not provide adequate ventilation for generators or other gas-powered equipment.

“Many poison emergencies happen when electrical power is lost in the period during and after natural disasters like hurricanes and winter storms,” according to S. Rutherford Rose, PharmD, FAAC, director of the Virginia Poison Center. “An entirely preventable emergency is carbon monoxide poisoning. That’s why we encourage anyone who loses power and plans to use a portable generator to follow some key safety steps.”

The American Association of Poison Control Centers recommends the following tips for using portable generators safely:

- Carefully follow the manufacturer’s safety instructions for portable generators.
- Never use portable generators indoors, in garages or near open windows. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that a generator should be placed no closer than 15 feet from a structure.
- Do not siphon gasoline by mouth to fill a generator with fuel.
- Use battery-operated (or battery-backup) carbon monoxide alarms. Be sure to test the batteries.
- If you experience sleepiness, dizziness, headaches, confusion, weakness or your carbon monoxide alarm sounds, immediately seek fresh air and call your poison center at 1-800-222-1222.

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More storm safety tips are available at [www.aapcc.org](http://www.aapcc.org). For more information, the media may contact Loreeta Canton, AAPCC director of public relations and member services, at 703.894.1863, 701.391.0626 (cell phone) or [canton@aapcc.org](mailto:canton@aapcc.org).

**About the American Association of Poison Control Centers:**

*The AAPCC supports the nation's 57 poison centers in their efforts to treat and prevent drug, consumer product, animal, environmental and food poisoning. Members staff the Poison Help hotline at 1-800-222-1222 that provides free, confidential, expert medical advice 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year from toxicology specialists, including nurses, pharmacists, physicians and poison information providers. In addition, the AAPCC maintains the only poison information and surveillance database in the United States, providing real-time monitoring of unusual poisoning patterns, chemical exposures and other emerging public health hazards. The AAPCC partners with federal agencies such as EPA, HRSA and the CDC, as well as private industry.*

*To learn more, visit [www.aapcc.org](http://www.aapcc.org), like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter, or read our blog at [aapcc.wordpress.com](http://aapcc.wordpress.com). To join your voice with other poison center supporters, register for the AAPCC advocacy network at [www.capwiz.com/aapcc](http://www.capwiz.com/aapcc) – click on “Action E-List.”*

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