



Put Safety First When Winter Weather Strikes

(Family Features) Severe winter weather and dangerously low temperatures can pose a serious threat to family safety, particularly when the power supply is threatened. Many families rely on portable generators as part of their emergency plan, which can provide peace of mind and protection when used properly.

Preparation is the best defense against the dangers of cold winter weather, as inclement weather can arise suddenly and bring power outages and restricted mobility. In addition to assembling an emergency kit, including basics like battery-operated flashlights, non-perishable food items and a first aid kit, many families also have a portable generator available for emergency use. Portable generators provide safety, while helping avoid food spoilage, providing access to radio or television for important news and weather updates, and delivering energy necessary to run lights, heaters, hot water or appliances necessary for cooking.

However, portable generators can pose serious health risks when used improperly. Most notable is carbon monoxide poisoning, which can cause extreme illness and even death. Because you cannot smell, see or taste carbon monoxide, which is emitted in the exhaust from the generator, it is essential to exercise precautions when using the machine.

The Portable Generator Manufacturers' Association recommends taking time to reacquaint yourself with your generator's features and safe operating instructions, as well as keeping these safety tips in mind:

- Keep the operator's manual in a safe place so you can refer to it easily for further information about safe operation and potential hazards.
- To avoid dangerous carbon monoxide accumulation from a portable generator, always "[Take It Outside](#)." Never run a portable generator indoors, in areas such as garages, basements, crawl spaces, breezeways, sheds or other partially enclosed spaces.
- Always place a portable generator downwind and point the engine exhaust away from occupied spaces.
- Avoid placing a portable generator near windows, doors or vents, as carbon monoxide gas can accumulate and potentially be drawn indoors.
- To power indoor items, install a manual transfer switch to avoid running dangerous cords through windows, doorways, holes in walls or ceilings.

- Install battery-operated carbon monoxide alarms according to manufacturer's instructions. Replace batteries and test the alarm regularly to ensure it is in good working condition.
- Learn to recognize the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning: headache, nausea, dizziness, shortness of breath, weakness and fainting.
- If you feel sick, dizzy or weak while using your portable generator, get to fresh air immediately and call 911 for emergency medical attention.

Before temperatures drop and winter arrives in full force, now is the perfect time to brush up on how to safely use your generator. Learn more about operating a portable generator during severe weather at pgmaonline.com and takeyourgeneratoroutside.com.

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