

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**For More Information Contact**

Phil Giaramita, 804-864-7008

## **HEALTH OFFICIALS WARN OF CARBON MONOXIDE DANGERS DURING SNOW STORM CLEANUP**

*Generator safety precautions can help prevent poisoning*

(RICHMOND, Va.)—Use of gas-powered appliances and generators following the recent snow storm increases the number of carbon monoxide poisoning cases and fatalities. As Virginians begin turning to alternate means to provide electricity and cooking capabilities, the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) is urging the public to avoid carbon monoxide exposure that can be a silent killer after a storm.

Carbon monoxide is an invisible, odorless, tasteless gas and is highly poisonous. Depending on the level of exposure, carbon monoxide may cause:

- Fatigue
- Weakness
- Chest pains for those with heart disease
- Shortness of breath upon exertion
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Headaches
- Confusion
- Lack of coordination
- Impaired vision
- Loss of consciousness
- In severe cases, death

VDH recommends the following precautions to help prevent carbon monoxide poisoning:

- Do not burn charcoal or gas grills inside a house, garage, vehicle, tent or fireplace.
- *Never* use a generator indoors, including in homes, garages, basements, crawl spaces and other enclosed or partially enclosed areas, even with ventilation. Opening doors and windows or using fans will not prevent carbon monoxide build-up in the home.
- *Always* locate the unit outdoors on a dry surface, away from doors, windows, vents and air-conditioning equipment that could allow carbon monoxide to come indoors.
- Follow the instructions that come with your generator. Position the unit outdoors and away from doors, windows, vents and air conditioning equipment that could allow carbon monoxide to come indoors.

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- Have your home heating systems (including chimneys and flues) inspected each year for proper operations and leakage.
- Install battery-operated carbon monoxide detectors or plug-in carbon monoxide detectors with battery back-up in your home, according to the manufacturer's installation instructions. The carbon monoxide detectors should conform to the latest safety standards for carbon monoxide detectors (UL 2034, IAS 6-96, or CSA 6.19.01).
- Test your carbon monoxide detectors frequently and replace dead batteries.
- If your carbon monoxide detector indicates high levels of carbon monoxide, leave the building immediately and call 911.
- Remember that you cannot see or smell carbon monoxide and portable generators can produce high levels of carbon monoxide very quickly.
- If you start to feel sick, dizzy, or weak while using a generator, get to fresh air right away. Do not delay.
- If you have a poisoning emergency, call the national Poison Information Center number at (800) 222-1222. If the victim has collapsed or is not breathing, call 911 immediately.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently have provided 30- and 15-second carbon monoxide awareness public service announcements in English and Spanish. The CDC is encouraging radio stations to download the public service announcements free from [www.cdc.gov/co/psa.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/co/psa.htm) (scroll down to "Public Service Announcements for Carbon Monoxide"). Other broadcast and print media can also use the information to alert viewers and readers.

The CDC has also prepared many card-sized carbon monoxide resources that can be printed and placed on generators and other emergency response sources of carbon monoxide. These resources are available at [www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/co-materials.asp](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/co-materials.asp).

For more information about how to protect yourself and your family before, during and after natural disasters, visit [www.vdh.virginia.gov](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov) or the Virginia Department of Emergency Management's Web site at [www.readyvirginia.gov](http://www.readyvirginia.gov).

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