

NEWS from CPSC

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission

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Surviving the Aftermath of Hurricane Dennis **CPSC Warns of Post-Storm Hazards from Portable Generators, Candles, and Wet Appliances**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – In advance of Hurricane Dennis hitting the Gulf Coast, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is warning residents in its path of the deadly dangers that can exist after a natural disaster sweeps through and knocks out power and causes flooding. The most serious hazard involves portable generators, which are often used to deal with the loss of electricity. Deaths tragically and frequently occur after a storm has passed, when homeowners or business owners set up a generator indoors or too close to a home or building.

CPSC strongly warns consumers to **never** use a generator indoors – including garages, basements, crawlspaces and sheds – even with ventilation. Exhaust fumes contain extremely high levels of carbon monoxide (CO) which can rapidly become deadly if inhaled. Last year, numerous deaths were reported throughout the Southeast due to CO poisoning while using generators in the aftermath of the four hurricanes that hit the region.

Consumers should only use a portable generator outdoors in a dry area away from doors, windows and vents that can allow CO to come indoors. Wait for the rain to pass before using a generator, as consumer-grade generators are not weatherproof and can pose the risk of electrocution and shock when used in wet conditions.

Additional life-saving safety tips from CPSC include:

- If using a generator, plug individual appliances into heavy duty, outdoor-rated extension cords and plug the cords into the generator.
- Check that the extension cords have a wire gauge adequate for the appliance loads and have all three prongs, including a grounding pin.
- Never store gasoline in the home or near a fuel-burning appliance, such as a natural gas water heater, where gasoline fumes could be ignited.
- Never use charcoal indoors – burning charcoal in an enclosed space can produce lethal levels of carbon monoxide.
- Make sure the batteries in your smoke alarm and carbon monoxide alarm are fresh. Test these alarms to make sure they are working.
- Do not use electrical or gas appliances that have been wet, and do not turn on damaged appliances because of the hazards of electric shock or fire. Do not use gas appliances that have been submerged because silt can make valves inoperable, leading to a gas leak or fire.
- Exercise caution when using candles. Use flashlights instead. If you must use candles, do not burn them on or near anything that can catch fire. Never leave burning candles unattended. Extinguish candles when you leave the room.

[Send the link for this page to a friend!](http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/prerel/prhtml05/05223.html) The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission is charged with protecting the public from unreasonable risks of serious injury or death from more than 15,000 types of consumer products under the agency's jurisdiction. Deaths, injuries and property damage from consumer product incidents cost the nation more than \$700 billion annually. The CPSC is committed to protecting consumers and families from products that pose a fire, electrical, chemical, or mechanical hazard or can injure children. The CPSC's work to ensure the safety of consumer products - such as toys, cribs, power tools, cigarette lighters, and household chemicals - contributed significantly to the 30 percent decline in the rate of deaths and injuries

associated with consumer products over the past 30 years.

To report a dangerous product or a product-related injury, call CPSC's hotline at (800) 638-2772 or CPSC's teletypewriter at (800) 638-8270, or visit CPSC's web site at www.cpsc.gov/talk.html. To join a CPSC email subscription list, please go to www.cpsc.gov/cpsclist.asp. Consumers can obtain this release and recall information at CPSC's Web site at www.cpsc.gov.
