

Stay Safe, While Staying Warm This Winter; CPSC Warns Consumers to be Cautious When Using Generators, Furnaces and Space Heaters

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New CPSC Report Shows Upward Trend in Non-Fire CO Deaths Continues

WASHINGTON, D.C. – As cold weather continues to impact much of the country, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is warning consumers about deadly hazards from home heating equipment, including space heaters, furnaces and fireplaces, based on the findings in a recent report.

A new [CPSC report](#) shows that the upward trend in non-fire carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning deaths from consumer products, including portable generators and heating appliances, continued for the 11-year period from 2010 to 2020. The estimated number of non-fire CO poisoning deaths associated with consumer products under CPSC’s jurisdiction rose to an all-time high of 254 in 2019. Although there were fewer estimated deaths, 211, in 2020, that number otherwise exceeds all earlier years in the period.

In 2020, the highest number of CO deaths associated with any single product category, 92, were associated with generators, which are often used to heat homes when the power goes out. The second highest number, 33, were associated with portable heaters.

Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless and poisonous gas known as the “invisible killer.” Most CO deaths in the U.S. occur in the colder months of the year, with more than half occurring in November, December, January, and February.

CPSC urges consumers to take safety precautions while keeping their home warm this winter.

Generators

A gasoline-powered generator used during weather-related power outages can produce as much CO as hundreds of cars. Since 2010, portable generators have been associated with an estimated 796 non-fire CO poisoning deaths, accounting for 40 percent of all non-fire CO deaths related to consumer products under CPSC’s jurisdiction.

- NEVER operate a portable generator inside a home, garage, basement, crawlspace, shed or other enclosed space. Opening doors or windows will not provide enough ventilation to prevent the buildup of lethal levels of CO.
- Always operate portable generators outside, at least 20 feet away from the house. Don’t operate a generator on a porch or in a carport. It may be convenient, but it’s too close to home and puts your family at risk of CO poisoning. Direct the generator’s exhaust away from your home and other buildings where someone can enter. Close windows and seal off vent openings that are near the generator or in the path of its exhaust.
- Regularly check and maintain your portable generator to ensure it will work properly when needed. Read and follow all labels, instructions and warnings on the generator and in the owner’s manual.
- Look for portable generators that have a CO shut-off safety feature. This safety feature automatically shuts off the generator when high levels of CO are present around the generator. CPSC estimates that models that are certified to the latest PGMA G300-2018 and UL 2201 safety standards reduce deaths from CO poisoning by 87% and 100%, [respectively](#). UL 2201 certified models have reduced CO emissions in addition to the CO shut-off feature.

Heating Systems

Fuel-burning heating systems, including furnaces and fireplaces, can be a source of fatal or hazardous CO levels. Heating systems can cause CO poisoning if they are improperly installed, poorly maintained, have defective or blocked venting systems or are misused.

- Have a professional inspect all fuel-burning heating systems, including furnaces, boilers, fireplaces, wood stoves, water heaters, chimneys, flues and vents each year.
- Clear snow away from the outside vents for fuel-burning appliances such as furnaces so that dangerous carbon monoxide does not build up in the house.

Portable Heaters

CPSC estimates that fuel-burning portable heaters were involved in an estimated 33 unintentional, non-fire CO poisoning deaths in 2020. Portable heaters can also cause fires.

- Never leave portable heaters on while sleeping.
- NEVER leave running unattended in a confined space to reduce hyperthermia hazards.
- Place the heater on a stable, level surface, located where it will not be knocked over.
- Keep all sides of the portable heater at least 3 feet from beds, clothes, curtains, papers, sofas and other items that can catch fire.
- Fuel-burning portable heaters should never be refueled while in use; turn the heater off and allow it to cool down before refueling.
- When using electric portable heaters, ALWAYS use a wall outlet; NEVER a power strip and NEVER run the heater’s cord under rugs or carpeting.
- Be mindful of children and pets around portable heaters.

CO Alarms

Working CO alarms save lives!

- Install battery-operated CO alarms or CO alarms with battery backup on each level and outside separate sleeping areas at home. Interconnected CO alarms are best; when one sounds, they all sound.
- Test CO and alarms monthly to make sure they are working properly, and replace batteries, if needed. Never ignore an alarm when it sounds. Get outside immediately. Then call 911.

Check for Recalled Products

Check to see if your home heating equipment has been recalled at www.cpsc.gov/recalls. If a product has been recalled, stop using it immediately and contact the recalling company for the remedy--a refund, repair or replacement.

Read more safety tips in our [Carbon Monoxide Safety Center](#).

Individual Commissioners may have statements related to this topic. Please visit www.cpsc.gov/commissioners to search for statements related to this or other topics.

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About the U.S. CPSC

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is charged with protecting the public from unreasonable risk of injury or death associated with the use of thousands of types of consumer products. Deaths, injuries, and property damage from consumer product-related incidents cost the nation more than \$1 trillion annually. CPSC’s work to ensure the safety of consumer products has contributed to a decline in the rate of injuries associated with consumer products over the past 50 years.

Federal law prohibits any person from selling products subject to a Commission ordered recall or a voluntary recall undertaken in consultation with the CPSC.

For lifesaving information:

- Visit CPSC.gov.
- Sign up to receive our [email alerts](#).
- Follow us on [Facebook](#), Instagram [@USCPSC](#) and Twitter [@USCPSC](#).
- Report a dangerous product or a product-related injury on www.SaferProducts.gov.
- Call CPSC’s Hotline at 800-638-2772 (TTY 800-638-8270).
- Contact a [media specialist](#).

Media Contact

Please use the below phone number for all media requests.
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