

# CPSC Urges Those Impacted by Tropical Storm Debby to Take Steps to Prevent CO Poisoning and Other Post-Storm Hazards

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is urging those impacted by Tropical Storm Debby to take steps to protect themselves and their families against carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning, electrocution, explosion and fires.

## Loss of Power—Using a Generator Safely

Consumers need to be especially careful when storms knock out electrical power. CO poisoning from portable generators can kill whole families in minutes. CO is called the invisible killer because it is colorless and odorless. CO poisoning from portable generators can happen so quickly that people can become unconscious before recognizing the symptoms of nausea, dizziness or weakness.

On average, more than 200 consumers die in the U.S. each year from CO poisoning related to consumer products, according to CPSC’s latest report on [Non-Fire Carbon Monoxide Deaths Associated with the Use of Consumer Products](#). About 92 of those deaths are linked to portable generators. Another [CPSC report](#) shows that from 2012 through 2022, where race was known, non-Hispanic Black or African Americans accounted for 23 percent of generator-related CO deaths, which is much higher than their share in the U.S. population.

Consumers should follow these safety tips to protect their families during hurricane season. The Atlantic hurricane season typically lasts from the beginning of June to the end of November.

In the case of a power outage, follow these important life-saving tips:

- NEVER operate a portable generator inside a home, garage, basement, crawlspace or shed. Opening doors or windows does not provide enough ventilation to prevent the buildup of lethal levels of CO.
- Operate portable generators outside only, at least 20 feet away from the house, and direct the generator’s exhaust away from the home and any other buildings that someone could enter. Close windows and seal off all other openings, such as soffit vents, dryer vents, and exhaust fan vents, that are near the generator or in the path of its exhaust. Do not operate a generator on an outside porch or in a carport. They are too close to the home.
- Follow portable generator instructions about electrical shock hazards in inclement weather, which may include use of an NFPA-rated non-combustible generator tent or may state to wait until rain passes.
- Check that portable generators have been maintained properly, and read and follow the 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, which is designed to shut the generator off automatically when high levels of CO are present around the generator. These models may be advertised as certified to the latest safety standards for portable generators—PGMA G300-2018 or G300-2023 and UL 2201—which are estimated to significantly reduce deaths from CO poisoning. UL 2201 certified models have reduced CO emissions in addition to the CO shut-off safety feature and are estimated to nearly eliminate the risk of death from CO poisoning.

## Check CO and Smoke Alarms

- WORKING SMOKE AND CO ALARMS SAVE LIVES! Install battery-operated smoke and CO alarms or smoke and CO alarms with battery backup on each level and outside separate sleeping areas at home. Interconnected combination smoke and CO alarms are best; when one sounds, they all sound.
- Make sure smoke alarms are installed on every level and inside each bedroom.
- Make sure CO alarms are installed on every level and outside each bedroom.
- Test smoke and CO 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.

## If Your Home Floods—Dangers with Wet Appliances

- Look for signs that your appliances have gotten wet. To reduce the risk of shock or electrocution, do not touch wet appliances that are still plugged into an electrical source.
- Before using your appliances, have a professional or your gas or electric company evaluate them for safety. Replace all gas control valves, electrical wiring, circuit breakers and fuses that have been under water.

## Dangers with Charcoal and Candles

- Never use charcoal indoors. Burning charcoal in an enclosed space can produce lethal levels of carbon monoxide. Do not cook on a charcoal grill in a garage, even with the garage door open.
- Use caution when burning candles. Use flashlights or battery-operated candles instead. If using candles, do not burn them on or near anything that can catch fire. Never leave burning candles unattended. Extinguish candles when leaving the room and before sleeping.

## CPSC resources:

- [Carbon Monoxide Safety Center](#)
- [PSA – Hurricane Safety Tips](#)
- [PSA - Seguridad en caso de huracán](#)
- [PSA - One portable generator produces the same amount of Carbon Monoxide as hundreds of cars](#)
- [PSA - Una planta eléctrica produce la misma cantidad de monóxido de carbono como cientos de autos](#)
- Link to broadcast quality video for media: Hurricane B-Roll -<https://spaces.hightail.com/space/XtFQ7YqK0x>

CPSC spokespeople are available for interviews. Email [jchavez@cpsc.gov](mailto:jchavez@cpsc.gov) or call (202) 923-7467 to arrange for an interview.

Individual Commissioners may have statements related to this topic. Please visit [www.cpsc.gov/commissioners](http://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](http://CPSC.gov).
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- Follow us on [Facebook](#), Instagram [@USCPSC](#) and Twitter [@USCPSC](#).
- Report a dangerous product or a product-related injury on [www.SaferProducts.gov](http://www.SaferProducts.gov).
- Call CPSC’s Hotline at 800-638-2772 (TTY 800-638-8270).
- Contact a [media specialist](#).

## Media Contact

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