



Emergency Heating Safety

Heating your home during a power outage or weather emergency is a major concern during the winter months. The safety of your family should be a top priority during these times as well. Alternate heating sources brought into the home during emergencies can produce carbon monoxide (CO) and become deadly.

CO is produced by incomplete combustion (burning) of fuels such as oil, propane, coal, wood, natural gas, gasoline, diesel fuel, charcoal and kerosene. Faulty or inadequately vented appliances such as fireplaces, wood stoves, charcoal or propane gas grills, kerosene heaters or gasoline-powered generators can produce deadly amounts of CO. When CO is inhaled (breathed) into the body, it inhibits the blood's ability to carry oxygen to body tissues and vital organs such as the heart and brain. CO is especially dangerous for children, older adults and people who have heart or lung conditions. It can cause headaches, nausea, fatigue, dizziness and burning eyes. Prolonged exposure causes more severe symptoms, including confusion, disorientation, convulsions and unconsciousness. In very severe cases, CO can be fatal. Emergency help is needed.

Here are some safety tips to prevent CO exposure:

- Never use a gas grill indoors. Use the grill at least ten feet away from the house or any building. Do not use the grill in a garage, breezeway, carport, on the porch or under a surface that can catch fire.
- Never use a charcoal grill indoors or store grill indoors with freshly used coals.
- Never use a portable generator indoors or in an attached garage. A portable generator will produce CO just like your car. Only operate the generator outdoors in a well-ventilated, dry area away from your home.
- Read the manufacturer's instructions BEFORE operating your emergency generator.
- Do not connect the generator directly to your home's wiring. This could damage your wiring and appliances.
- If using a generator, plug only necessary appliances directly into the generator using heavy-duty, outdoor-rated power cords. Do not overload. A portable generator should be used only when necessary.
- Never store fuel indoors or try to refuel a generator while it is running. Gasoline and other flammable (fire producing) liquids should be stored outside your living area in properly labeled, safety containers. Vapors can travel along the ground and be ignited by open flames, pilot lights or cigarettes. Avoid spilling fuel on hot components.
- Turn off all equipment powered by the generator before shutting the generator down.
- Avoid getting burned when handling the generator. Many parts are hot enough to cause severe burns.
- Keep a fully charged, approved fire extinguisher located near the generator.
- Keep children away from portable generators at all times.

For more information call the Guilford County Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health at (336) 641-7777 or visit www.myguilford.com