

The New Jersey Poison Information & Education System — Serving New Jersey Since 1983

## ***MEDIA ALERT***

Media Contacts:  
800-222-1222 (800-962-1253 outside NJ)

### **New Jersey Gears Up for Another Round of Mother Nature**

- Gas Powered Generators Increase the Risk for Carbon Monoxide Poisoning After Bad Weather --

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**BREAKING NEWS:** Severe weather is expected and may cause electrical outages. Carbon monoxide poisoning is an immediate danger and more prevalent during bad weather.

#### **Safety Tips to Prevent Carbon Monoxide Poisoning During Bad Weather:**

1. Check the batteries in your smoke detector and carbon monoxide detector. If you don't have either detector, install before the bad weather hits.
2. Have a flashlight with fresh batteries ready to use (you may have used the flashlight during Sandy, replace the batteries if you did)
  - Make sure to use a flashlight when giving or taking medication. Read all labels carefully.
3. Have a battery-operated radio available and be sure the batteries are fresh
4. DO NOT bring portable gas powered generator into the home or garage –
  - Do not place them outside near any open windows/doors
  - They should be at least 25 feet from any house.
5. DO NOT bring other gas powered equipment, propane stoves, propane lights, or kerosene camping stoves into the house or garage.
6. DO NOT heat your home with your stove.
7. DO NOT cook with charcoal indoors.
8. DO NOT idle a car in a closed garage. Once you pull in, immediately turn off the engine.
9. Keep your home well ventilated. If need be, keep a window slightly cracked to allow air flow.
10. After the storm, during the cleanup DO NOT USE gas powered cleaning equipment indoors..

#### **Safety Tips to Prevent Food Spoilage during a Power Outage:**

1. In preparing for a power outage, make the temperature colder than usual on both freezers and refrigerators. This will prolong the cold after a power outage.
2. During a power outage, keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed and open them only when necessary.
3. Place a refrigerator thermometer in the center of the middle shelf and check the temperature. If it has risen to 40 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, discard any potentially spoiled foods. Such foods include meat, poultry, fish, dairy and egg products, soft cheese, cooked beans, cooked rice, cooked potatoes, cooked pasta, potato salad, custard and pudding.
4. Fill freezers to capacity, but refrigerators need room for air to circulate.
5. When power is restored, allow time for the refrigerator to reach below 40 degrees Fahrenheit before restocking.
6. "When in doubt, throw it out!"

#### **If you suspect Carbon Monoxide Poisoning, Take Immediate Action:**

1. If your loved one is unconscious or unresponsive, get out them out of the house and call 911 immediately.
2. Exit the house/building immediately. Do not waste time opening windows to "air" it out; this will delay your escape and

- cause you to breathe in more dangerous fumes.
3. Contact your local fire department/energy provider.
  4. Call the NJ Poison Experts, 800-222-1222, for immediate treatment advice. Do not waste time looking for information on the internet about carbon monoxide poisoning. Call us for fast, free and accurate information.

**(Newark, NJ) – October 10, 2013** — Another storm is heading our way and expected to begin during our commute home this evening. Although this may not be as severe as Sandy, the New Jersey Poison Experts are warning the public to take the necessary steps to make sure the storms pass as safely as possible.

During bad weather, it is not uncommon for homes and offices to experience power outages. Residents tend to close down their homes and frequently bring items indoors that are potentially more dangerous than the bad weather outside. After the storm passes, area flooding will leave many residents with significant damage to their homes and businesses. Portable generators and other gasoline powered equipment are often used during the cleanup process, but using them indoors is dangerous and potentially poisonous.

The poison experts assisted over 108 calls related to carbon monoxide during Tropical Storm Sandy. The greatest number of exposures reported occurred in Monmouth County followed by Essex, Bergen and Middlesex. The exposures appeared to be related to the use of a generator in 39 instances with 9 located outside but close to the house (closer than the suggested 25 feet), 2 were located in the basement and 28 in the garage. Seventeen calls concerned possible exposures from the use of stoves or space heaters, 22 to charcoal/propane grills, 5 faulty heating systems, 3 fireplaces, 5 either unspecified or other (one bonfire), and in 15 calls a carbon monoxide detector alert went off but no source was found.

Carbon monoxide poisoning is often referred to as the Silent Killer because it is a gas that gives no warning – you can't see it, smell it or taste it. When the gas is breathed into the body it combines with the body's blood and prevents it from absorbing oxygen. Since this gas is easily detected with an installed and fully functional carbon monoxide detector, the NJ Poison experts highly recommend that everyone install carbon monoxide detectors in his or her home. Exposure to carbon monoxide can produce headaches, sleepiness, fatigue, confusion and irritability at low levels. At higher levels, it can result in nausea, vomiting, irregular heartbeat, impaired vision and coordination, and death.

With the potential threat of power outages, it is important to be careful about food stored in refrigerators and freezers. Food-borne illness, also known as food poisoning, results from the eating of food that is contaminated with harmful bacteria, viruses or other foreign material. Contamination is caused by improper food handling and preparation practices. The symptoms of food-borne illness are flu-like and may include abdominal pain, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting and fever.

Remember, help is always available 24 hrs a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year, even during bouts of Mother Nature. Call 800-222-1222 to speak with a NJ Poison Expert. Help is available in more than 150 languages. Program the Poison Help line (800-222-1222) into your cell phone and post it near your home and office phones too.

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### **About NJPIES**

As New Jersey's only poison control center, the New Jersey Poison Information & Education System provides information on poison prevention and treatments. Chartered in 1983, NJPIES provides free consultation through telephone hot line services and the Web. Medical professionals such as physicians, registered nurses and pharmacists offer confidential advice regarding poison emergencies and provide information on poison prevention, drugs, food poisoning, animal bites and more. These specialists are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

NJPIES coordinates state poison education and research and is designated as the regional poison center by the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services and the American Association of Poison Control Centers. It tracks incidences of adverse reactions to food, drugs and vaccines in order to monitor potential public health issues and provide data to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A division of the Department of Preventive Medicine and Community Health of the New Jersey Medical School of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. NJPIES has a state-of-the-art center located on the school's Newark campus.

New Jersey residents seeking immediate information about treating poison emergencies, and those with any drug information questions, should call the toll-free hot line, **800-222-1222**, any time. The hearing impaired may call **973-926-8008**. For more information, visit [www.njpies.org](http://www.njpies.org) or call **973-972-9280**.

**About Rutgers**

Established in 1766, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, is America's eighth oldest institution of higher learning and one of the nation's premier public research universities. Serving more than 65,000 students on campuses, centers, institutes and other locations throughout the state, Rutgers is the only public university in New Jersey that is a member of the prestigious Association of American Universities.

Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences (RBHS) is the health care education, research, and clinical division of Rutgers University, comprising nine schools and their attendant faculty practices, centers, institutes and clinics; New Jersey's leading comprehensive cancer care center; and New Jersey's largest behavioral health care network.

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