

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

## NEWS RELEASE

Media Contacts:

800-222-1222 (800-962-1253 outside NJ)

### Severe Weather Warning for NJ - Know How to Prevent Unintentional Poisonings -

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*Available for Interviews*

(Newark, NJ) – October 2, 2015 — As severe weather is expected for New Jersey, the NJ Poison Experts call your attention to the possible health risks that may develop during and after such conditions. During Super Storm Sandy we learned a great deal about the increased risk for unintentional poisoning/exposure.

"Families need to start thinking about their "emergency" plan in the event Joaquin becomes a reality for New Jersey," said Steven Marcus, MD, executive and medical director of the NJ Poison Center. "Knowing what the risks are and having a plan in place makes all the difference."

The NJ Poison Center strongly encourages all residents to program the Poison Help Line (800-222-1222) into all phones (home, cell, and office) in preparation for what may be to come in the next few days and for future events. Poison experts are available 24/7/365. Call 800-222-1222, chat [www.njpies.org](http://www.njpies.org), or text [8002221222@njpies.org](mailto:8002221222@njpies.org); the hearing impaired may also use their TTY and call 973-926-8008.

Keep cell phones charged as much as possible. If power is lost it may be lost for an extensive period of time and your cell phone may become your lifeline! You might want to be sure you have the appropriate charger to use in your car should you house's power fail and you have access to a car.

Through education, the NJ Poison Experts hope to build awareness that although unintentional poisoning can cause serious injury and even death, they are preventable. Keep these key safety tips in mind while preparing for Hurricane Joaquin or any other weather-related event. What you learn today may potentially save your life or the life of a loved one.

#### Before

- Prevent carbon monoxide poisoning by having your heating system checked in case temperatures drop and you need to turn on the heat. Have a professional ensure that the system is working properly and there are no leaks and the system is venting properly.
  - Never heat your living area by using grills, camp stoves, or other gasoline, kerosene, propane, natural gas or charcoal-burning devices inside your home, basement, garage, carport, camper, boat cabin, or tent – or even outside near an open window or door.
- Check detectors (fire and carbon monoxide) to be sure they are working. Change batteries if needed. If you don't have these, install them immediately.
  - If your CO detector sounds, leave immediately and call the fire department and/or utility company.
  - For advice or questions, call the NJ Poison Experts at 1-800-222-1222. Do not waste time looking up information on the Internet.
- Buy fire extinguishers and make sure your family knows where they are and how to use them.
- Prepare an emergency "go bag" for your family. Include items essential for survival such as non-perishable food, clean drinking water, extra clothing, first aid supplies, medications, pet supply items, personal hygiene products, infant supplies, blankets, radio, flashlight, batteries, etc.

- Be sure to have an extra supply of prescription medications (at least a 7 day supply) for everyone in your family including pets.
    - Check expiration dates of medications just like you would check your fire alarms and carbon monoxide detectors – every time you change the clock ahead or back for daylight savings time.
    - If you are pregnant, make sure to include your prenatal vitamins.
    - Always read medication labels before taking or giving medications to family members including pets. Use flashlights during a power outage.
  - It's best to have a battery operated radio and flashlights. Don't forget to pack extra batteries for both.
- Prepare a family and pet emergency plan including an evacuation route. Practice routinely with your family.
  - Keep important family, house, pet, and medical documents in water and fire-proof containers.
  - Show family members how to turn off water, gas and electricity at main switches in your home.
  - Put an emergency car kit in your trunk in case you are instructed to evacuate.
- Learn about your community, workplace, and children's school emergency plans, warning signals, and evacuation routes.
  - Enroll in their electronic emergency alert system to receive notifications.
  - Find out the location of emergency shelters. Inform local authorities about anyone with special needs/disability.
  - Staying informed. Check all types of media – websites, newspapers, radio, TV– for global, national and local information. It's important to have not only updated information but reliable information.
- With the 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.
  - Make the temperature colder than usual on both freezers and refrigerators. This will prolong the cold after a power outage.
  - 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.
  - Fill freezers to capacity, but remember to leave room in refrigerators to allow the air to circulate.
  - Keep both refrigerator and freezer doors closed; open sparingly.
  - When power is restored, allow time for the refrigerator to reach below 40 degrees Fahrenheit before restocking.
  - If it looks funny, smells funny or if you are just unsure, "When in doubt, throw it out!"

#### During/After

- Do not bring generators, pressure washers, or other gasoline, propane, natural gas or charcoal-burning devices inside your home, basement, garage, carport, camper, boat cabin, or tent – or even outside near an open window or door.
  - Only use generators outside, at least 25 feet from both your and your neighbor's home, doors, or windows.
  - **DO NOT** idle a car in a closed garage. Once you pull in, immediately turn off the engine.
- Floodwater can contain infectious organisms and toxins. Do not eat or drink anything that has been contaminated with floodwater.
  - Handwashing is an easy, effective way to prevent the spread of germs. Soap and clean water is all you need to reduce the number of germs on hands.
  - Do not drink well water until it is tested and found safe of contamination from germs or toxins. Wells may become contaminated during a flood.
  - Reduce the amount of water used by limiting toilet flushing, dishwashing, washing clothes, and showering.
- Use clean (uncontaminated) water (bottled or boiled) to wash, prepare, or cook food, brush your teeth, wash dishes, prepare baby formula, make ice, wash hands, and bathe with.
  - Make sure to have an adequate supply of water available for washing and drinking.
  - Boil-water for at least 1 minute. Allow the water to cool before using.

**Help is Just a Phone Call Away!**

If someone is unconscious, not breathing, seizing/convulsing, bleeding profusely, difficult to arouse/wake up, etc., call 911 immediately, otherwise call the NJ Poison Experts at (1-800-222-1222).

"Don't waste valuable time looking up information on the Internet when every minute counts. Remember, you may not have Internet access during a power outage so it's important to store our number now in your phones. Having a poison expert give you exact instructions for your specific situation can help significantly during those critical first few minutes," said Marcus.

We are social. Join us on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/njpies](http://www.facebook.com/njpies)) and Twitter ([@NJPoisonCenter](https://twitter.com/NJPoisonCenter)) for breaking news, safety tips, trivia questions, etc. Stay tuned for more poison prevention week safety information.

### Real People. Real Answers.

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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 Emergency Medicine 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. NJPIES is funded, in part, by the NJ Department of Health and the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

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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