

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

## ***MEDIA ALERT***

### **Media Contacts:**

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

### **National Hurricane Preparedness Week (2014) Get Your Family Ready for the Next Hurricane Sandy**

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New Jersey Poison Information and Education System (NJPIES)

*Available for Interviews*

**(Newark, NJ) – May 22, 2014** — Natural disasters affect thousands of people every year even in New Jersey. No one ever knows when a disaster may strike especially if it was not predicted. During National Hurricane Preparedness Week (May 25<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup>), the NJ Poison Experts stress the importance of making sure your family has a disaster plan in place before the next “Sandy.” Knowing what the risks are and having a plan in place beforehand is a critical part of being prepared and may make all the difference when seconds count.

Hurricane Sandy serves as a powerful reminder that storms can produce a great deal of destruction to property and result in serious public health effects. The NJ Poison Center received a surge of calls related to Hurricane Sandy during and long after the disaster event subsided. Many of these effects were the result of activities which may have been preventable if there had been proper education prior to the event and subsequent.

“We looked at the calls related to Sandy and the recovery from the acute events and determined that the major toxicological problem was that of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning,” said Steven Marcus, MD, executive and medical director of the NJ Poison Center. Many were exposed to carbon monoxide by the inappropriate use and placement of gasoline powered generators, cleaning and cooking equipment. Since gas powered equipment give off carbon monoxide, one’s risk for CO poisoning greatly increases during usage. Many victims don’t realize they have been exposed since this dangerous gas is colorless, odorless and tasteless. While CO poisoning can occur over hours, high concentrations of CO can kill within minutes. “It is extremely important to have working carbon monoxide detectors on every level, especially outside bedroom areas,” said Dr. Marcus.

The poison experts offer the following safety tips to keep in mind when preparing for the next “Sandy”.

- 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. Also find out the location of emergency shelters.
- Prepare an emergency “go bag.”
- Prepare a family emergency plan including an evacuation route. Practice routinely with your family.
- Inform local authorities about anyone with special needs/disability).
- Keep important family, house, and medical documents in water and fire-proof containers.
- Store emergency supplies such as non-perishable food, clean drinking water, extra clothing, first aid supplies, medications (prescription), pet items, personal hygiene products, infant supplies, etc.
- Be sure to have an emergency kit for your car.
- Check detectors (fire and carbon monoxide) regularly to be sure they are working. Change batteries twice a year. 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.
- Never use generators, pressure washers, grills, camp stoves, or other gasoline, propane, natural gas or charcoal-burning devices inside your home, basement, garage, carport, camper, boat cabin, or tent
  - Only use generators outside, at least 25 feet from your home, doors, or windows.
- Take a basic first aid and CPR class.
- Program the Poison Help Line (1-800-222-1222) into your phones (cell, home and work).
- Show family members how to turn off water, gas and electricity at main switches in your home.
- Buy fire extinguishers and make sure your family knows where they are and how to use them.

While every hurricane season comes with uncertainty, NJ residents can count on the NJ Poison Experts to be available 24/7/365 to answer your calls for help before, during, and after a disaster event. 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. Many of the calls we get are genuine emergencies,” said Dr. Marcus. “Having a poison expert give you exact instructions for your specific situation can help significantly during those critical first few minutes.”

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

Remember, calls are free and confidential and help is always available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every day of the year, even during bouts of Mother Nature like Hurricane Sandy. Call 800-222-1222, chat via [www.njpies.org](http://www.njpies.org), or text in at [8002221222@njpies.org](mailto:8002221222@njpies.org) to contact a NJ Poison Expert. Help is available in more than 150 languages.

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. Share what you learn with your family (including children), friends, and coworkers.

### **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 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. 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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