

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

BREAKING NEWS

Media to contact:
800-222-1222
800-962-1253 if outside NJ

For Immediate Release
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Check Your Carbon Monoxide Detectors Ahead of the Storm Winter Storms Bring Increased Risk of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Warning: Carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning is serious and potentially deadly. The risk of poisoning greatly increases during severe weather. CO is a poisonous gas that gives no warning since you can't see it, smell it, hear it, or taste it. This gas is impossible to detect if you do not have working carbon monoxide detectors inside your living space. While preparing for this week's storm, check your CO detectors to make sure the batteries and the unit are working. If you suspect CO poisoning, handle it as a medical emergency.

(New Jersey, NJ) – Each year, New Jersey residents are hospitalized and even die from exposure to carbon monoxide. Carbon monoxide is an extremely dangerous and potentially deadly poison gas produced by generators, stoves, furnaces and other fuel burning appliances/equipment. It is important to recognize the signs and symptoms of CO poisoning and to act quickly! Early symptoms of CO poisoning are similar to symptoms of the common cold, seasonal flu, strep throat, and COVID-19 (headache, dizziness, weakness, upset stomach, vomiting, chest pain, and confusion).

"As residents prepare for high snow totals, gusting winds, and possible power outages, our poison center will brace for an uptick in poison exposures/injuries to a variety of substances as it relates to bad weather," says Diane Calello, executive and medical director of the [New Jersey Poison Control Center](#) at [Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, Department of Emergency Medicine](#). "Rest assured our healthcare staff is available to answer your calls for help or information before, during, and after the storm."

Stopping carbon monoxide gas from building up inside your living space or car is the best way to prevent dangerous health effects. Below are key safety tips to lower your risk of CO exposure/poisoning during winter storms.

Outdoors

- Generators should only be used outside. Keep generators more than 20 feet from both you and your neighbor's home, doors, or windows. Carbon monoxide gas can come into a home or building if the generator is too close. [Generator safety tips](#)
- Clear snow blocking/around your heating system, dryer, and other appliance vents, intakes, and exhausts.

- Gas and other fuel-burning appliances must have adequate ventilation. If ventilation is not great where these appliances are located, keep a window slightly cracked to allow airflow.
- Do not idle a car in a snowbank. If stuck in the snow, make sure to clear the tailpipe and surrounding area to prevent exhaust fumes from entering the car.
- Make sure flues are open before starting a fire in your fireplace.

Indoors

- If you do not have battery-operated or battery back-up CO detectors in your living area, install them right away. If you have detectors, make sure the batteries and the units are working. If the detectors are old and/or not working properly, replace them.
- You must not use your stove or oven to heat your living space. Doing so can cause dangerous levels of carbon monoxide gas to build up inside your home or apartment.
- Generators, pressure washers, grills, camp stoves, or other fuel-burning equipment should not be used indoors for any reason.
- Keeping a car running in a closed garage is extremely dangerous. Once you pull in, immediately turn off the engine to prevent carbon monoxide gas from building up inside your home.

If you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning, get help immediately:

1. If someone is unconscious or unresponsive, get him or her out of the house and call 9-1-1 immediately.
2. Leave the house or building right away. Do not waste time opening windows. This will delay your escape and cause you to breathe in even more dangerous fumes.
3. Contact your local fire department/energy provider.
4. Call the NJ Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222 for immediate treatment advice. Do not waste time looking for information on the internet about carbon monoxide poisoning. Call the poison center for fast, free and accurate information.

Your local poison control center is a great resource for information and emergencies related to carbon monoxide and other potential poisoning exposures. New Jersey residents can reach their poison control center, 24/7: Call (1-800-222-1222); Text (973-339-0702); Chat via [website](#). If someone is unconscious, not breathing, hard to wake up, or having a seizure; call 9-1-1.

Help is Just a Phone Call Away!

Stay Connected: Facebook ([@NJPIES](#)) and Twitter ([@NJPoisonCenter](#)) for breaking news, safety tips, trivia questions, etc.

Real People. Real Answers.

Available for Media Interviews

Diane P. Calello, MD, Executive and Medical Director, New Jersey Poison Control Center, Rutgers NJ Medical School's Department of Emergency Medicine

Bruce Ruck, Pharm.D., Managing Director, New Jersey Poison Control Center, Rutgers NJ Medical School's Department of Emergency Medicine

Lewis S. Nelson, MD, Professor and Chair of Emergency Medicine at Rutgers NJ Medical School

About New Jersey Poison Control Center / NJPIES, 1-800-222-1222

Chartered in 1983, the New Jersey Poison Information & Education System (NJPIES), known to the public as the New Jersey Poison Control Center, is the state's primary defense against injury and deaths from intentional and unintentional poisonings. It is designated as the state's regional poison control center by the New Jersey Department of Health and the American Association of Poison Control Centers. It is a division of the Department of Emergency Medicine at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School. NJPIES has a state-of-the-art center located at Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences in Newark. NJPIES is funded, in part, by the NJ Department of Health, NJ Hospitals and the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

Hotline staff (physicians, registered nurses, and pharmacists) provide free, telemedicine consultation through hotline services (telephone, text, chat) regarding poison emergencies and provide information on poison prevention practices, drug interactions and overdoses, food poisoning, environmental chemical exposures, animal/insect bites and stings, plant and other outdoor exposures, carbon monoxide and lead poisonings, and more. NJPIES' services are free, confidential/private, available 24/7, and help is available in any language. Call 1-800-222-1222; Text 973-339-0702; [Chat](#). Stay Connected: [FB](#) / [Twitter](#) / [Website](#)

About Rutgers New Jersey Medical School

Founded in 1954, Rutgers New Jersey Medical School is the oldest school of medicine in the state. Today it is part of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey and graduates approximately 170 physicians a year. In addition to providing the MD degree, the school offers MD/PhD, MD/MPH and MD/MBA degrees through collaborations with other institutions of higher education. Dedicated to excellence in education, research, clinical care and community outreach, the medical school comprises 20 academic departments and works with several healthcare partners, including its principal teaching hospital, University Hospital. Its faculty consists of numerous world-renowned scientists and many of the region's "top doctors." Home to the nation's oldest student-run clinic, New Jersey Medical School hosts more than 50 centers and institutes, including the Public Health Research Institute Center, the Global Tuberculosis Institute and the Neurological Institute of New Jersey. For more information please visit: njms.rutgers.edu.

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