



# News Release

Memphis and Shelby County Health Department  
814 Jefferson Ave., Memphis, TN 38105

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## Avoid the Danger of Carbon Monoxide

MEMPHIS, TN. — The Memphis-Shelby County Health Department wants to remind everyone of the dangers associated with using portable generators to cope with the power outages caused by the recent severe weather. Small gasoline-powered engines and tools produce high concentrations of carbon monoxide (CO) - a poisonous gas that can cause illness, permanent neurological damage, and death. Because it is colorless, odorless, and non-irritating, CO can overcome exposed persons without warning. Often there is little time before they experience symptoms that inhibit their ability to seek safety. Prevent CO poisoning by:

- Never operating generators or any portable engines inside buildings or in partially enclosed areas such as attached garages – even with the garage door open. These units should only be used when they can be located outside and away from open windows and air intakes.
- Learning to recognize the symptoms and signs of CO poisoning. Early symptoms are described as flu-like and include headache, nausea, fatigue, and dizziness. Higher exposure levels can result in visual disturbances, changes in personality, loss of consciousness, and death. Any of these symptoms and signs can occur within minutes of exposure to high levels of CO, but lower levels of exposure can also be deadly over longer periods.
- Installing a CO monitor in your home. Monitors are available at many hardware and home stores.

The constant noise produced by portable generators can be annoying to you and your neighbors, but never try to muffle the sound by placing a generator inside an attached garage. When using a generator, always read the instructions in the owner's manual and follow the proper safety precautions.

For more information about carbon monoxide, generators, and monitors, contact the Pollution Control Section of the Memphis-Shelby County Health Department at (901) 544-7775, or your local fire station.