

Storm alert: How to keep your home safe

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(HealthDay)—Winter weather can bring hidden dangers, the most deadly of which can include carbon monoxide poisoning and fires.

As blizzards, tornadoes and [severe storms](#) batter the nation and many lose power and heat, the danger of [carbon monoxide poisoning](#) and fires from portable generators and other devices increase exponentially, the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC) warns.

Carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning is called the invisible killer because it's colorless and odorless. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that more than 400 people die each year in the United States from CO poisoning. The CPSC estimated that each year between 2015 and 2017, 78 people died from CO poisoning caused by portable generators.

To keep you and your family safe, the CPSC offers these important tips:

Generators:

- Be sure your generator is properly maintained, and follow the instructions and warnings in the owner's manual.
- Use portable generators outside only. Keep it at least 20 feet from the house.
- Direct the exhaust away from the home and other buildings that someone could enter.
- Never use a portable generator inside a home, garage, basement, crawlspace, shed or on the porch. Opening doors or windows doesn't provide enough ventilation to prevent deadly levels of CO.
- CO [poisoning](#) can happen so fast that people can lose consciousness before the symptoms of nausea, dizziness, or weakness are even felt.

Smoke and CO alarms:

- Test CO and smoke alarms to be sure they are working properly,

and replace batteries, if needed.

- Install battery-operated CO alarms or CO alarms with battery backup outside sleeping areas and on each floor of your home.
- Place smoke alarms on every floor, inside each bedroom and outside sleeping areas.
- Never ignore CO and [smoke alarms](#). Get outside immediately. Then call 911.

Charcoal:

- Never use charcoal indoors. Burning charcoal can produce deadly levels of CO.
- Do not cook on a charcoal grill in a garage, even with the door open.

Candles:

- Be careful when using candles. Use flashlights instead.
- When burning candles, don't put them on or near anything that can catch fire.
- Never leave burning candles unattended.
- Douse candles when you leave the room and before sleeping

More information

More information: Visit the National Safety Council for more on [carbon monoxide poisoning](#).

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