



Fire Marshals Association Of Palm Beach County

Topic: Portable Generators

Issue Date: 11/01/06

Portable generators help make our lives a little more tolerable during periods of extended power outages. However, those benefits don't come without risk. These devices create Carbon Monoxide (CO) as a product of combustion. CO is a colorless and odorless gas that can quickly cause negative health effects, including death. Each year during hurricane season, local Fire Departments respond to many calls involving CO.

When utilizing a portable generator, think about how you can protect yourself and your family before you start it up. Always follow the manufacturer's recommendations to safely operate the generator.

Never place a portable generator inside a building, under an overhang, or on a roof. Keep the device at least 10 feet away from any structure. A helpful tip to measure that distance from a structure is to look at the roof overhang of the structure and go out 10 ft from there. This will help decrease the possibility of buildup of exhaust, that can seep in through attic vents. Keep an eye on the wind direction. Even with sufficient separation, wind can push CO into a house, especially if doors or windows are open due to a power outage. Have a carbon monoxide detector in the residence to alert you if fumes are building up.

Use care with gasoline. Only refuel a generator after it has cooled down. Be sure to store flammable liquids / gasoline only in approved containers. Never store in excess of 25 gallons of flammable liquids/gasoline indoors if you live in a residence up to 3 units and 10 gallons if you live in a residence of greater than 3 units. Use

remaining fuel in your car after the power is restored to limit the risk of fire or explosion in your home.

Make sure the generator is grounded so it does not pose an electrical hazard. Follow the NEC standards for the temporary wiring and load calculations. Never back feed the house through the 220 volt dryer outlet.

Code Reference

Contact Information

Palm Beach County Fire Rescue

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Palm Beach County Fire Code, 11.7.1.1; "Portable combustion engines shall not be located within 10 ft of a building or rooftop".