



Robert P. Astorino, Westchester County Executive

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### AS STORM APPROACHES, COUNTY EXECUTIVE ISSUES CARBON MONOXIDE CAUTION Stay Warm Safely and Avoid Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Westchester County Executive Robert P. Astorino is concerned that as thousands of Westchester residents remain without power due to Superstorm Sandy, some may use their ovens or improperly vented generators, charcoal stoves or other gasoline-fueled equipment to heat their homes.

“Carbon monoxide poisoning is a tragedy that is easily prevented,” Astorino said. “Never run gas-powered generators in your garage, basement or on a covered porch. Keep them outside and away from windows and doors to keep dangerous carbon monoxide from entering your home.”

Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless, tasteless gas that is highly poisonous and is produced by gas and charcoal-powered equipment. Signs and symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning can include fatigue, weakness, chest pains for those with heart disease, shortness of breath upon exertion, nausea, vomiting, headaches, confusion, lack of coordination, impaired vision, loss of consciousness, and in severe cases, death.

“Carbon monoxide poisoning can happen in just minutes and it can be deadly,” warned Westchester County Health Commissioner Sherlita Amler, MD. “Be sure your carbon monoxide alarms are working and your generator is properly installed. Don’t risk the life of you and your family members. If you think you may have carbon monoxide poisoning, seek immediate medical attention.”

The Westchester County Health Department recommends the following measures to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning:

- Do not burn charcoal or gas grills inside a house, garage, vehicle, tent or fireplace.
- NEVER use a generator indoors, including in homes, garages, basements, crawl spaces, and other enclosed or partially enclosed areas, even with ventilation. **Opening doors and windows or using fans will not prevent CO build-up in the home.** Keep it protected from rain and snow in its own shed.
- **ALWAYS** locate the unit outdoors on a dry surface, away and downwind from doors, windows, vents and air conditioning equipment that could allow CO to come indoors.

**More**

- Follow the instructions that come with your generator. Do not exceed the rated capacity of your generator. Fire may result.
- Install battery-operated CO alarms or plug-in CO alarms with battery back-up in your home, and follow the manufacturer's installation instructions.
- Test your CO alarms frequently and replace dead batteries.
- Remember that you cannot see or smell CO, and portable generators can produce high levels of CO very quickly.
- If you start to feel sick, dizzy, or weak while using a generator, get to fresh air right away. Do not delay!
- For a poison emergency, call the New York Poison Information Center at 1-800-222-1222.
- **If the victim has collapsed or is not breathing, call 911 immediately.**
- Only use grills and camp stoves outdoors.
- If you use a fireplace, wood stove, or portable kerosene heater to stay warm, be sure there is adequate ventilation to the outside. Without enough fresh air, carbon monoxide fumes can build up in your home.
- Never use a natural gas or propane stove/oven to heat your home.
- If you use a kerosene heater, use 1-K grade kerosene only. Never substitute with fuel oil, diesel, gasoline or yellow (regular) kerosene.
- Open a window to provide ventilation when a portable kerosene heater is in use to reduce carbon monoxide fumes inside the home.
- Never add fuel to a space heater when it is hot. The fuel can ignite, burning you and your home.
- Keep the heater away from objects that can burn, such as furniture, rugs or curtains.
- If you have a fire extinguisher, keep it nearby.
- Never leave candles burning if you leave the room.
- Keep children away from space heaters, fireplaces and wood stoves to avoid accidental burns.

For more information on this and other health topics, visit [www.westchestergov.com/health](http://www.westchestergov.com/health) and [www.westchestergov.com](http://www.westchestergov.com); Like us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/wchealthdept](http://www.facebook.com/wchealthdept) or follow us on Twitter @wchealthdept.