



# EMERGENCY NEWS FROM THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

State Emergency Operations Center, Camp Murray, Washington  
Emergency Management Division, Washington Military Department

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## For immediate release

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## Carbon monoxide reminder

Camp Murray, Wash. – With temperatures dropping tonight in areas affected by this week’s storm and flood disaster, citizens who are still without power are reminded to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning by using generators safely and avoiding the use of gas or charcoal burning devices indoors.

The two counties continuing to have the most power outages are Grays Harbor and Pacific, which earlier today had approximately 14,500 and 1,900 customers without power, respectively. Mason County has approximately 50 customers without power and Mason County, 24.

Carbon monoxide is a poisonous gas that cannot be seen or smelled and can kill a person in minutes. Carbon monoxide can build up so quickly that victims are overcome before they can get help. If you are using portable generator power, make sure you use a carbon monoxide monitor to assure your personal safety. Monitors are readily available at commercial outlets at a cost of about \$30.

Free fact sheets and flyers about carbon monoxide poisoning in six languages—English, Chinese, Korean, Russian, Spanish and Vietnamese—can be found on the Washington Emergency Management Division’s Web site at [http://emd.wa.gov/preparedness/prep\\_campaign.shtml#Carbon](http://emd.wa.gov/preparedness/prep_campaign.shtml#Carbon).

The State Department of Health (DOH) and local health departments have distributed information about carbon monoxide dangers in the disaster area this week. DOH’s Dec. 6 news release on the subject can be found at [http://www.doh.wa.gov/Publicat/2007\\_news/07-213.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/Publicat/2007_news/07-213.htm), and immediately below.



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## Carbon monoxide detectors vital to safe use of generators in power outage

Never burn charcoal or run gas-powered equipment indoors

**OLYMPIA** – The secretary of health strongly recommends that people using generators during power outages always use carbon monoxide detectors to keep their families safe. It’s crucial to use generators safely and avoid using gas or charcoal burning devices indoors to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning that can kill.

"We had a reminder of the consequences of carbon monoxide yesterday," said Governor Chris Gregoire at a media briefing today about storm and flood response. "A generator malfunction at a grocery store in Ocean Shores sent 13 people to the hospital. Fortunately, none of them died, but it's a serious reminder of the need to use gas generators safely."

Carbon monoxide detectors provide additional protection but don't replace prevention:

- Gas-powered generators should never be used indoors, and should be placed well away from open windows and vents.
- Charcoal briquettes should never be burned indoors for heat or cooking.
- Gas ovens should not be used as an indoor heat source, even for a short time.

"Too often, the point about preventing carbon monoxide poisoning is brought home to us with the sad news of people getting sick and even dying," said Secretary of Health Mary Selecky. "A carbon monoxide detector can help. Remember, we're in this together — if you have friends, family or neighbors who are without power, we urge you to check on them personally. Be sure they're not burning charcoal or running a generator indoors."

Other sources of carbon monoxide include blocked chimney flues as well as gas or kerosene heaters; never burn charcoal in a fireplace. Don't forget that an attached garage is another room of your home. Carbon monoxide fumes can seep-in from generators or idling cars, so don't run either of them in the garage.

Carbon monoxide is a poisonous gas that cannot be seen or smelled and can kill a person in minutes. Carbon monoxide is produced whenever any fuel such as gas, oil, kerosene, wood, or charcoal is burned. Hundreds of people die accidentally every year from carbon monoxide poisoning caused by appliances that are not used properly or that are malfunctioning. Carbon monoxide can build up so quickly that victims are overcome before they can get help.

Once inhaled, carbon monoxide can cause permanent brain damage, chest pains or heart attacks. Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include headache, weakness, dizziness, confusion, fatigue, and nausea.

The health department is working with the state Emergency Operations Center to distribute informational materials in affected areas. At flu vaccination clinics held at retailers around the state last weekend, the state Department of Health handed-out thousands of fact sheets about [preventing carbon monoxide poisoning](#). That information is also available on the agency's home page ([www.doh.wa.gov](http://www.doh.wa.gov)).

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