Portable Generators and Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Portable generators are popular with Michigan homeowners, campers and hunters. Fuel-burning portable generators are convenient, but they can also be dangerous, since they give off carbon monoxide (CO). **You cannot see, taste or smell CO, but it can be deadly when you breathe it in.** One portable generator produces hundreds of times more CO than one car. CO can build up in enclosed or partially enclosed spaces. It is important to use portable generators safely to reduce your risk of CO poisoning.

Be Aware.

CO builds up in enclosed and partially enclosed spaces.

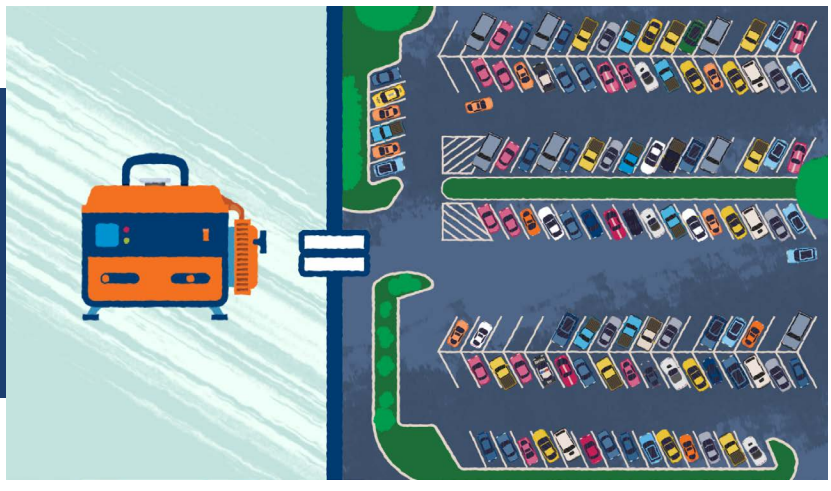
CO can build up inside when portable generators run too close to enclosed or partially enclosed spaces, like:

- Homes or buildings.
- Garages.
- Barns and sheds.
- Basements.
- Campers and RVs.
- Carports.
- Porches.

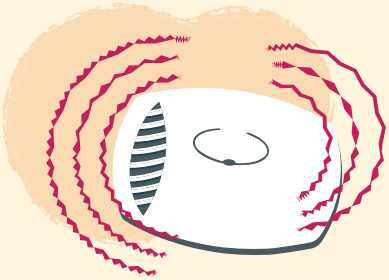
Properly use portable generators.

- Have a professional inspect portable generators every year to make sure it is working correctly.
- Use portable generators outside only, never inside enclosed or partially enclosed spaces.
- Run portable generators **at least 20 feet away** from people and enclosed or partially enclosed spaces.
- If needed, use an extra-long extension cord with your generator.
- Keep portable generators far from windows, doors and air intakes.
- Remember CO can build up and linger for hours, even when the portable generator has shut off.

One portable generator produces hundreds of times more CO than one car.



Stay Prepared.



Install CO detectors.

- Install 10-year lithium battery CO detectors on every level of your home and near all sleeping areas to alert you of CO. **CO detectors save lives!**
- Test CO detectors at least monthly.
- If you do not have a lithium battery CO detector, replace alkaline batteries twice a year. An easy way to remember is during time changes.
- Replace your CO detector according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Know CO poisoning symptoms.

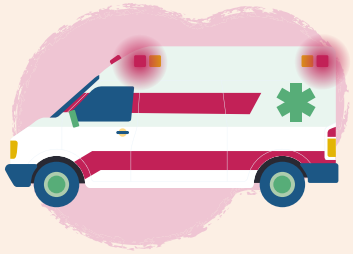
CO poisoning has flu-like symptoms, including:

- Headache.
- Dizziness.
- Nausea.
- Vomiting.
- Fatigue.
- Weakness.
- Chest tightness.
- Confusion.
- Unconsciousness.
- Coma.
- Death.

Remember: People who are sleeping or intoxicated might not notice CO poisoning symptoms before it's too late.

Symptoms should not be ignored.
You could DIE within minutes if you do nothing.

Get to Fresh Air.



If you suspect CO poisoning, have symptoms or if your CO detector goes off:

1. Leave the enclosed or partially enclosed space and move to fresh air right away.
2. Call 911.
3. Stay away from the enclosed or partially enclosed space until the fire department tells you it is safe to return, even if you aren't experiencing symptoms.

CO poisoning is preventable.

Be Aware. Stay Prepared. Get to Fresh Air.

Learn more about CO poisoning.

Go to Michigan.gov/CarbonMonoxide or scan the QR code.

MDHHS
Michigan Department of Health & Human Services

MDHHS-Pub-1946 (9-26)

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