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TAKE PRECAUTIONS TO PREVENT CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING



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Tallahassee, Fla.— The Florida Department of Health urges Floridians to prevent carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning if they are without power following Hurricane Michael. Alternative sources of power such as generators can cause CO to build up in a home and poison the people and animals inside. CO is found in fumes produced by burning fuels such as gasoline, natural gas, propane, kerosene, charcoal and wood. Large amounts of CO can quickly overwhelm a person without warning which leads to greater risk of illness or death especially with increased exposure time.

“Carbon monoxide is a poisonous gas that can cause illness and death within a short period of time,” said State Surgeon General Dr. Celeste Philip. “It is invisible, tasteless, odorless and non-irritating, which is why taking precautions is vital and having sufficient working CO alarms in your home is critical. Proper use of generators, gas powered tools and grills can protect you and your family from the potential tragedy of an accidental poisoning.”

Since symptoms of CO poisoning are similar to those of the flu, food poisoning or other illnesses, you may not think CO poisoning is the cause. The common signs and symptoms include headache, nausea, weakness, abdominal discomfort/pain, dizziness and confusion. Children, pregnant women and individuals with heart conditions are most vulnerable.

Anyone who suspects symptoms of CO poisoning should immediately go outside the home or building to fresh air and seek prompt medical attention. If a person has collapsed or is not breathing, move them outside to fresh air and call 911 for emergency medical assistance immediately.

Tips to help prevent CO poisoning:

- Never use a portable generator or a fuel-powered tool indoors or in other enclosed or partially enclosed areas. Always place portable generators outdoors on a dry surface far away (at least 20 feet - further if possible) from doors, windows, vents and air conditioning equipment that could allow CO to enter.
- Never use outside equipment like a charcoal grill, hibachi, lantern, portable camping stove or propane or natural gas grills/burners inside a home, tent, or camper.
- Never leave the motor running in a vehicle parked in an enclosed or partially enclosed space, such as a garage.
- Install battery-operated CO alarms or plug-in CO alarms with battery backup inside a home at least one per level and bedroom cluster.

For more information about suspected poisoning emergencies, call the Florida Poison Information Center at 1-800-222-1222.

To learn more about carbon monoxide poisoning prevention, visit www.FloridaHealth.gov/environmental-health/carbon-monoxide/index.html or the Radon and Indoor Air Program at 1-800-543-8279.

View our Florida Health Minute on Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Prevention at https://youtu.be/wXXWXqp_LMk .

About the Florida Department of Health

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