

## How to Avoid Carbon Monoxide Poisoning and Use Generators Correctly

Carbon monoxide is a deadly, colorless, odorless gas – emphasis on deadly. It is produced by appliances that burn fuel, such as furnaces, water heaters, fireplaces, cars, ovens, and generators.

Fuel-burning appliances that are properly ventilated and maintained normally should not discharge carbon monoxide. But appliances can break down and leaks can occur. That's why it's so important to install carbon monoxide detectors throughout your building.

### **How many and how often?**

You should place carbon monoxide sensors on each level of your building and in the basement, where there are usually many fuel-burning appliances.

Many models of carbon monoxide sensors have a test button to press to make sure they are working correctly. Test detectors monthly and change batteries every six months. You can also purchase carbon monoxide test kits to ensure that your sensors are in fact working.

### **What to do if a carbon monoxide detector goes off**

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include nausea, headaches, tiredness, and dizziness. If a carbon monoxide detector goes off, and people have been experiencing those symptoms, immediately evacuate the building and call 911. Do not go back into the building until it has been declared safe by authorities.

### **Proper use of appliances**

Some carbon monoxide leaks can be prevented with a little common sense. For example, never use a gas grill inside of a building or run your car with the garage door closed.

### **Correct generator use**

Carbon monoxide poisoning often occurs because of generator misuse. According to the **Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)**, you should “make sure a generator has three to four feet of clear space on all sides and above it.”

OSHA also states that you should never use a fuel-burning generator in an enclosed space. Even if you open windows for ventilation, carbon monoxide can still build up. When you use a generator out of doors, do not place it “near doors, windows, or vents” because that too could cause carbon monoxide to build up.

### **Generators and fire hazards**

Carbon monoxide is not the only hazard connected to generators. Improper use of generators could also result in fire. To prevent a blaze, do not refuel your generator while it is running or hot. Turn it off, and allow it to cool first. According to OSHA, because generators become very hot, spilled gasoline or kerosene can start a fire if it comes in contact with “hot engine parts.”

**Be cautious about storing fuel, too**

Only store generator fuel in “approved containers that are properly designed and marked for their contents, and vented,” OSHA directs. Keep the fuel containers in cool and dry places “away from flame-producing and heat-generating devices” and away from people.

Carbon Monoxide may be deadly, but careful use of generators and other fuel-burning appliances, as well as having working carbon monoxide detectors, and a little common sense, can keep parishioners and employees safe.