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## *Office of the State Fire Marshal State Fire Marshal*

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### **GENERATOR SAFETY**

While portable generators are a great resource tool to have available at a time of need, they can also be the cause of injuries and occasionally death. Most of these accidents can be avoided if proper operation is heeded. Each year about 3,500 Americans die in fires and about 20,000 are injured from portable generator usage. Portable generators are internal combustion engines used to generate electricity. They are useful when temporary or remote power is needed, and are commonly used during cleanup and recovery efforts following disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes, blackouts, heavy snow falls or summer storms, etc. This fact sheet provides tips for using portable generator safely to avoid accidental injury or death while remaining safe.



### **HAZARDS ASSOCIATED WITH GENERATORS**

- Shocks and electrocution from improper use of power or accidentally energizing other electrical systems
- Carbon monoxide from a generator's exhaust.
- Fires from improperly refueling a generator or inappropriately storing the fuel for a generator.
- Noise and vibration.

### **FIRE PREVENTION AND HOME FIRE/INJURY SAFETY TIPS**

- Always use generators outside away from doors, windows and vents. NEVER use generators inside buildings or partially enclosed areas, even with ventilation.
- Follow all manufactures' instructions for use.
- Keep generator dry. Place on a dry surface under an open, canopy-like structure.
- Dry hands before touching the generator.
- Never use a generator in an attached garage, even with the door open.
- Place generator so that exhaust fumes can't enter the home through windows, doors or other openings in the building.
- Never plug the generator into a wall outlet. This can cause utility workers and others using the same transformer to receive a shock and die because of the electricity.
- Extension cord should be heavy-duty outdoor-rated. Make sure the entire cord is free of cuts or tears and the plug has all three prongs; especially a grounding plug.

- If you must connect a generator to house wiring, have a licensed electrician add the appropriate equipment. Your utility company may be able put in an appropriate transfer switch as well.
- Turn off generators and let them cool down before refueling. Never refuel a generator while it is running.
- Store fuel for the generator in a container that is intended for the purpose and is correctly labeled as such. Store the container outside of living areas and away from fuel-burning appliances.



### **BE PREPARED FOR A FIRE**

- One of the best ways to protect yourself and your family is to have a working smoke alarm that can sound fast for both a fire that has flame, and a smoky fire that has fumes without flames. It is called a "Dual Sensor Smoke Alarm." A smoke alarm greatly reduces your chances of dying in a fire.
- Make sure you have and know your home escape plan and go to your designated meeting place. Make sure everyone in your family, including any over night guests, know at least two (2) escape routes from their location.

### **FACT**

- CO deaths associated with generators have spiked in recent years as generator usage has risen. Make sure you have an approved and operating CO alarm installed in their proper locations.

Sources: NFPA National Fire Protection Association and FEMA U. S. Fire Administration / U. S. Department of Homeland Security and OSHA Occupational Safety and Health Administration

**A Fire Safety Message from the  
Rhode Island Office of the State Fire Marshal  
"Prevention Through Education"  
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