

# Fact Sheet: Be Safe When Using A Portable Generator

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**SAN JUAN, PR** – Many survivors in Puerto Rico are using portable generators as a result of power failure in the wake of Hurricane María. Be aware that generators can cause dangerous hazards such as:

- Carbon monoxide poisoning from the engine exhaust pipe
- Fire
- Electrocution

Here are some safety tips:

- Be sure to read the manufacturer's instructions on how to use the generator.
- **Carbon monoxide poisoning**
  - Do not use a generator indoors or in partially enclosed spaces- including homes, garages, and crawl spaces - even those areas with partial ventilation.
  - Do not or near open doors and windows. Using fans will not prevent carbon monoxide build-up in the home. Do not place the generator in front of open windows.
  - Do not assume that you are safe. Be aware that carbon monoxide fumes emitted by gasoline, propane, diesel or gas engines can be fatal. As carbon monoxide is odorless people are not aware of its presence.
  - Install carbon monoxide alarms inside your home to alert you of dangerous levels. Be sure to follow the manufacturer's recommended placement.
- **Electrocution or electric shock**
  - Always connect the generator to the appliances with heavy-duty extension cords.
  - Hooking up your generator directly into your home power supply could increase the voltage or could cause a surge to the outside power lines and potentially injure or electrocute an unaware utility lineman. It also bypasses some of the built-in household circuit protection devices. Connecting the generator to your home could cause a surge in electricity that might result in



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injury or death to yourself or your family.

- Use a qualified electrician to install the appropriate equipment in accordance with local electrical codes, or ask your utility company to install an appropriate power transfer switch.
- Fire
  - Keep your generator outside and fuel your generator outside.
  - Do not store fuel for your generator in your house. Gasoline, propane, kerosene, diesel and other flammable liquids should be stored outside living areas in properly labeled, non-glass safety containers.
  - Do not store fuel near a fuel-burning appliance, for example a gas stove.
  - If the fuel is spilled or the container is not sealed properly, invisible vapors from the fuel can travel along the ground and be ignited by the appliance's pilot light or by arcs from electric switches.
  - Before refueling the generator, turn it off and let it cool down. Gasoline or other flammable liquids spilled on hot engine parts could ignite, and invisible vapors from the fuel can travel along the ground and be ignited by the generator's pilot light or by arcs from electric switches in the appliance.

a yellow generator

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