



FEMA

Disaster News

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PUBLIC HEALTH SURVEY REVEALS CONTINUING SAFETY CONCERNS

Use of Generators, Kerosene Heaters and Grills Still Pose Dangers for Those Without Power

FRANKFORT, Ky. – Preliminary results from a survey of more than 500 households in 10 Western Kentucky counties over the weekend indicate serious safety concerns remain for those still without power, health officials announced today.

The most striking preliminary finding indicates that many Kentuckians in these areas are at continued risk for carbon monoxide poisoning due to the improper use of generators, kerosene heaters and grills. The biggest problem observed involved generators being used in enclosed areas or too close to the home.

Findings also indicated that carbon monoxide detectors are playing a key role in saving lives.

“Carbon monoxide poisoning is deadly,” said William Hacker, M.D., Kentucky Department of Public Health commissioner. “We urge Kentuckians to take steps to prevent exposure to carbon monoxide and avoid heating sources, such as propane heaters and charcoal grills, while indoors. It can be a matter of life or death. We also ask neighbors to share this information with one another, especially while individuals are without power and may not receive broadcasts from the news media.”

As Kentuckians continue to recover from the affects of the severe winter storm, the Kentucky Division of Emergency Management and Federal Emergency Management Agency are working together to coordinate local, state and federal resources available under the president’s disaster declaration covering 93 counties.

The Kentucky Department for Public Health requested assistance from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in conducting an assessment of specific needs and issues in communities experiencing the largest impact from the ice storm. CDC mobilized 28 Epidemic Intelligence Service officers, subject matter experts and supporting staff for the door-to-door sampling.

Some specific health and safety recommendations:

- Make sure generators are a safe distance from the home, approximately 25 feet away.
- If you have a carbon monoxide detector, check to make sure the batteries are active.

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- If you don't have one, install a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector.
- If the detector sounds, leave the home immediately and call 911. Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless gas. Poisoning from carbon monoxide is treatable, if detected early.
- If you are using a kerosene heater, follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully for their specific heater model and make sure the wick is clean and set at the proper level.
- Operate kerosene heaters in a well-vented area. Leave a door open to the rest of the house or keep an outside window open to ensure an adequate flow of fresh air. Infants, small children and pets should be kept away from heaters to avoid serious burns.
- Early symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include headache, nausea, vomiting and fatigue, and some survey teams encountered individuals with such symptoms at affected homes.
- Gas and charcoal grills and camp stoves designed to be operated outdoors should never be used inside your home, basement or garage or near a window.

More information about carbon monoxide poisoning can be found on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/co/guidelines.htm> or via the Poison Control hotline at 800-222-1222.

FEMA leads and supports the nation in a risk-based, comprehensive emergency management system of preparedness, protection, response, recovery, and mitigation, to reduce the loss of life and property and protect the nation from all hazards including natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

Additional information about this disaster is available at www.fema.gov and www.kyem.ky.gov.

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