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PRACTICE GENERATOR SAFETY AND AVOID CARBON MONOXIDE DANGERS

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OCALA, Fla.—Many without power are currently using generators or grills until electricity is restored. Carbon monoxide poisoning is a real risk to residents, however, unless they follow safety protocol.

Carbon monoxide is a highly poisonous, invisible, odorless and tasteless gas. Depending on the level of exposure, carbon monoxide may cause headache, nausea, lethargy (or fatigue), weakness, abdominal discomfort/pain, confusion, dizziness, visual disturbances including blurred vision, numbness and tingling, loss of muscle control or coordination, irritability, agitation, chest pain, shortness of breath, palpitations, seizures, loss of consciousness, and in severe cases, death.

The Florida Department of Health in Marion County recommends taking the following precautions to help prevent carbon monoxide poisoning:

- Do not burn charcoal or gas grills inside a house, garage, vehicle, tent or fireplace.
- **NEVER** use a generator indoors, including in homes, garages, basements, crawl spaces, and other enclosed or partially enclosed areas, even with ventilation. Opening doors and windows or using fans will not prevent carbon monoxide build-up in the home.
- **ALWAYS** locate the unit outdoors on a dry surface, away from doors, windows, vents, and air conditioning equipment that could allow carbon monoxide to come indoors. Follow the instructions that come with your generator.
- Use battery-operated carbon monoxide alarms or plug-in carbon monoxide alarms with battery back-up in your home, according to the manufacturer's installation instructions. The carbon monoxide alarms should be certified to the requirements of the latest safety standards (UL 2034, IAS 6-96, or CSA 6.19.01).
- Test your carbon monoxide alarms frequently and replace dead batteries.
- **REMEMBER:** you cannot see or smell carbon monoxide, and portable generators can produce high levels of carbon monoxide very quickly.
- If you start to feel sick, dizzy, or weak while using a generator, get to fresh air RIGHT AWAY. DO NOT DELAY.
- If you have a poisoning emergency, call your nearest Florida Poison Information Center at 1-800-222-1222. If the victim has collapsed or is not breathing, call 911 immediately.

For more information, please visit <http://www.floridahealth.gov/environmental-health/carbon-monoxide/index.html> or www.FloridaDisaster.org.

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