

# NEWS from CPSC

## U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission

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Statements from the Commission attached

### New Danger Label Required on All Portable Generators

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) voted unanimously (2-0) today to require manufacturers of portable generators to warn consumers of carbon monoxide (CO) hazards through a new "Danger" label. The label states that, "Using a generator indoors CAN KILL YOU IN MINUTES."

Manufacturers will be required to place the "Danger" label on all new generators and the generators' packaging. The label warns consumers that a generator's exhaust contains carbon monoxide, a poison that cannot be seen and has no odor, and that generators should never be used inside homes or garages, even if doors and windows are open.

The death toll from CO associated with generators has been steadily rising in recent years. At least 64 people died in 2005 from generator-related CO poisoning. Many of the deaths occurred after hurricanes and major storms. CPSC staff is aware through police, medical examiner and news reports of at least 32 CO deaths related to portable generators from October 1 through December 31, 2006.

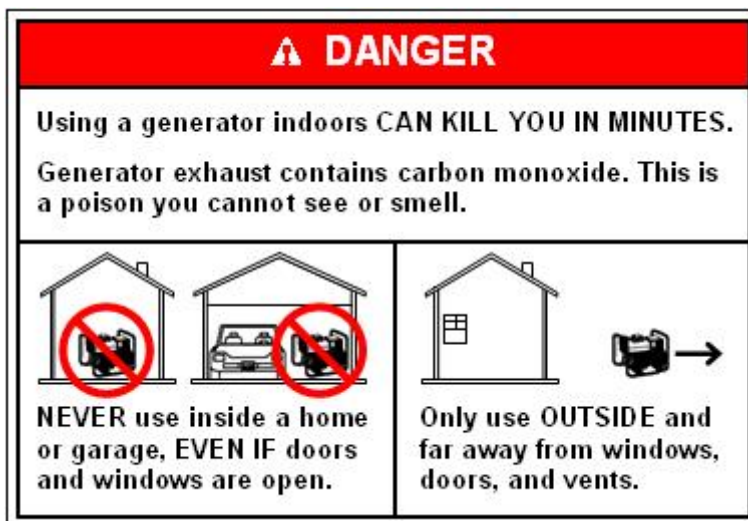
"These deaths from carbon monoxide poisoning are preventable," said Acting CPSC Chairman Nancy Nord. "The warning labels are meant to stop consumers before they make what could be a fatal mistake."

Generators should be used outdoors only, far from windows, doors and vents. The CO produced by one generator is equal to the CO produced by hundreds of running cars. It can incapacitate and kill consumers within minutes.

The new "Danger" label requirements for generators manufactured or imported will take effect 120 days after the regulation is published in the Federal Register.

In a separate action last month, the Commission began rulemaking to address safety hazards with generators by approving an advance notice of proposed rulemaking (ANPR). The Commission directed staff to investigate various strategies to reduce consumers' exposure to CO and to enable and encourage them to use generators outdoors only. Those strategies include generator engines with substantially reduced CO emissions, interlocking or automatic shutoff devices, weatherization requirements, theft deterrence and noise reduction.

### Generator On-Product Label



**Generator On-Package Label**



STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE NANCY A. NORD  
 ACTING CHAIRMAN  
 U.S. CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION

BALLOT VOTE (FINAL RULE FOR LABELING REQUIREMENTS FOR PORTABLE GENERATORS)

January 4, 2007

The demand for portable generators has increased greatly in recent years. So too have the number of people who have been killed or sickened by carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning from the improper use of those generators. Portable generators are extremely useful machines, particularly after the loss of electricity in the wake of a storm or other unforeseen circumstance. However, the amount of CO emitted from a portable generator can be several hundred times that released by a modern car's exhaust and can kill consumers in a very short period of time. Consumers need to be adequately warned of the hazards posed by the improper use of a portable generator.

Today I am voting to promulgate a final rule that requires all portable generators sold in the United States to bear an explicit warning label that will better advise consumers about the very real danger of CO poisoning posed by the use of a portable generator in or near a home. The final rule requires labeling that uses explicit language that warns, "Using a generator indoors CAN KILL YOU IN MINUTES," and "NEVER use inside a home or garage, EVEN IF doors and windows are open," as well as other pertinent safety warnings. Providing this safety information will convey to consumers the CO hazard associated with generators and instructions on how to avoid the hazard. The deaths resulting from CO poisoning from improper portable generator use are preventable, and this warning label is an important step towards eliminating these tragic, but avoidable, deaths in the future.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE THOMAS H. MOORE ON THE FINAL RULE REGARDING LABELING REQUIREMENTS FOR PORTABLE GENERATORS

January 4, 2007

I am voting today to issue a final rule for labeling requirements for portable generators. This vote today concludes a process that involved excellent Commission staff work and is an important beginning step toward improvements in the safe use and operation of portable generators.

The Commission staff concluded several years ago that the warning labels on portable generators were not as clear or as strong as they could be about the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning related to operating portable generators in or near living spaces. Staff worked in the voluntary standards arena, through Underwriters Laboratories (UL), to make changes to the labeling requirements, as well as to the operation of the generators themselves. When this process stalled, UL took it upon itself to impose new labeling requirements for generators bearing the UL certification mark. But this is not a consensus standard and it is unclear how many currently marketed generators bear the new UL warning label.

The Commission's broader and more comprehensive review of the existing portable generator safety measures could take a considerable amount of time to reach a conclusion. There remain inconsistencies in generator operations which the label cannot cure, such as, the inability to use generators in the very circumstances—wet conditions—in which they are most likely to be needed, and instructions to use a short extension cord, which can have the effect of placing the generator too close to the house for safe operation. But while we are working on the other issues relating to generator safety, we should do what we can to try to stem the rising tide of deaths from portable generators. Therefore, I think that today's action to mandate improved warning labeling could be one important step in enhancing generator safety.

As a matter of course, we will take another look at the labeling of generators in the context of the broader generator safety rulemaking. If fundamental changes are proposed to the generators themselves, it could certainly have an impact on future generator labeling requirements.

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[Send the link for this page to a friend!](#) The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission is charged with protecting the public from unreasonable risks of serious injury or death from more than 15,000 types of consumer products under the agency's jurisdiction. Deaths, injuries and property damage from consumer product incidents cost the nation more than \$700 billion annually. The CPSC is committed to protecting consumers and families from products that pose a fire, electrical, chemical, or mechanical hazard or can injure children. The CPSC's work to ensure the safety of consumer products - such as toys, cribs, power tools, cigarette lighters, and household chemicals - contributed significantly to the 30 percent decline in the rate of deaths and injuries associated with consumer products over the past 30 years.

To report a dangerous product or a product-related injury, call CPSC's hotline at (800) 638-2772 or CPSC's teletypewriter at (800) 638-8270, or visit CPSC's web site at [www.cpsc.gov/talk.html](http://www.cpsc.gov/talk.html). To join a CPSC email subscription list, please go to [www.cpsc.gov/cpsclist.asp](http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsclist.asp). Consumers can obtain this release and recall information at CPSC's Web site at [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov).