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Generator Use Increases Threat of “Silent Killer”- Carbon Monoxide

Commonly used power source may emit lethal levels of carbon monoxide

(Chicago) **November 18, 2013**– In light of Sunday’s devastating tornados, the Illinois Poison Center (IPC) is urging residents in disaster -stricken areas to practice caution when using generators to power their homes and businesses. Frequently called the “silent killer” because it cannot be seen, smelled or tasted, carbon monoxide is very dangerous in high concentrations. Carbon monoxide poisonings are common during disaster situations due to improperly operated generators; the risk is further increased with power outages during cold weather periods.

“As our fellow Illinoisans begin to recover and rebuild from yesterday’s disaster, we encourage them to be mindful of the increased risk for carbon monoxide poisoning from the use of generators during extended power outages,” said Dr. Michael Wahl, IPC Medical Director. “Generators can produce high, if not fatal, levels of carbon monoxide when used improperly.”

The IPC experts offer the following tips to stay safe from carbon monoxide poisoning:

- Never use a generator indoors or in partially enclosed spaces like garages. Opening doors and windows or using fans will not prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Do not locate generators near doors, windows, vents that attach to the side of the house or air conditioning units that could pull the carbon monoxide indoors.
- Make sure the generator stays dry.
- Use up-to-date battery-operated carbon monoxide alarms in your home.
- Follow the manufacturer’s instructions for using generators and carbon monoxide alarms.
- Test carbon monoxide alarms frequently.

The IPC experts also recommend the following tips to avoid risks associated with alternative methods of heating a home due to power outages:

- Do not use cooking equipment – such as grills, stoves, ovens, gas camp stoves or hibachis — for heating your home.
- Do not leave the stove, fireplace or space heaters on while sleeping.

Carbon monoxide poisoning usually occurs slowly over a period of several hours; however, at very high concentrations, carbon monoxide can kill in minutes. If you believe you or someone

you know is a victim of carbon monoxide poisoning, seek fresh air immediately. Once you or the victim are out of immediate danger, call the IPC at 1-800-222-1222 to receive treatment advice.

For more information about the carbon monoxide poisoning and prevention, please visit the [IPC's web site](#).

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The Illinois Poison Center is a non-profit health service that provides the people of Illinois with comprehensive and trusted information and treatment advice on potentially harmful substances via a free, confidential 24-hour hotline staffed by specially trained doctors, nurses and pharmacists.