



## NEWS RELEASE

The New Jersey Poison Information & Education System  
Serving New Jersey Since 1983



### Media Contacts:

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Weekend: Call 1-800-222-1222

**Severe rain storms can cause electrical outages. Carbon monoxide poisoning is an immediate danger and more prevalent during bad weather.**

### **SAFETY TIPS TO PREVENT CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING DURING BAD WEATHER:**

In the event of power outages, take these precautions:

1. Do not bring portable generators, propane stoves, charcoal grills, and any gas-powered equipment into the home or garage.
2. Never cook with charcoal indoors.
3. Check the batteries on your carbon monoxide detector.
4. If you don't have a detector, install one before the bad weather hits.
5. Keep your home well ventilated. If need be, keep a window slightly cracked to allow air flow.
6. Do not idle a car in a closed garage. Once you pull in, immediately turn off the engine.
7. Have a flash light or candles and matches at the ready.

### **SAFETY TIPS TO PREVENT FOOD SPOILAGE DURING A POWER OUTAGE:**

To prevent food spoilage, take these precautions:

1. During a power outage, keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed and open them only when necessary.
2. Place a refrigerator thermometer in the center of the middle shelf and check the temperature. If it has risen to 45 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, discard any potentially spoiled foods. Such foods include meat, poultry, fish, dairy and egg products, soft cheese, cooked beans, cooked rice, cooked potatoes, cooked pasta, potato salad, custard and pudding.
3. When power is restored, allow time for the refrigerator to reach below 40 degrees Fahrenheit before restocking.
4. "When in doubt, throw it out!"

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### **IF YOU SUSPECT CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION:**

- Get out of the house and
- Contact your local fire department immediately.
- Do not waste time opening windows or trying to "air" out the house/building; which will delay your escape from possibly dangerous fumes.

**Newark, N.J., August 25, 2011**— With Hurricane Irene on its way up the East Coast threatening to bring severe weather conditions to New Jersey, the NJ Poison Experts are warning residents to take necessary steps to make sure the hurricane passes as safely as possible. When storms of this magnitude occur, unintentional carbon monoxide poisoning is common.

During bad weather, it is not uncommon for homes and offices to experience power outages. Residents tend to close down their homes and frequently bring items indoors that are potentially more dangerous than the bad weather outside. After the storm passes, the heavy rainfall and flooding will leave many residents with significant damage to their homes and businesses. Portable generators and other gasoline powered equipment are often used during the cleanup process, but using them indoors is dangerous and potentially poisonous.

Carbon monoxide is an odorless and colorless gas that is only easily detected with an installed and fully functional carbon monoxide detector. Signs and symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning *may* include: headaches, sleepiness, fatigue, confusion and irritability, nausea, vomiting, irregular heartbeat, impaired vision and coordination and death.

With the potential threat of power outages, it is important to be careful about food stored in refrigerators and freezers. Food-borne illness, also known as food poisoning, results from the eating of food that is contaminated with harmful bacteria, viruses or other foreign material. Contamination is caused by improper food handling and preparation practices. The symptoms of food-borne illness are flu-like and may include abdominal pain, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting and fever.

### **Help is Just a Phone Call Away**

If you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning, or have questions about the safety of an item in your home, call the **NJ Poison Control Hotline at (1-800-222-1222)**. The NJ poison experts are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to answer questions and provide guidance and advice. Officials recommend putting the number in all family cell phones as well as programming it as a speed dial number on landlines, and prominently posting the number near home and phones.

### **About NJPIES**

As New Jersey's only poison control center, the New Jersey Poison Information and Education System provide information on poison prevention and treatments. Chartered in 1983, NJPIES provides free consultation through telephone hotline services and the Web. Medical professionals such as physicians, registered nurses and pharmacists offer confidential advice regarding poison emergencies and provide information on poison prevention, drugs, food poisoning, animal bites and more. These specialists are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

NJPIES coordinates state poison education and research and is designated as the regional poison center by the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services and the American Association of Poison Control Centers. It tracks incidences of adverse reactions to food, drugs and vaccines in order to monitor potential public health issues and provide data to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A division of the Department of Preventive Medicine and Community Health of the New Jersey Medical School of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, its state-of-the-art center is located on the school's Newark campus.

New Jersey residents seeking immediate information about treating poison emergencies, and those with any drug information questions, should call the toll-free hotline, **800-222-1222**, anytime. The hearing impaired may call **973-926-8008**. For more information, visit [www.njpies.org](http://www.njpies.org) or call **973-972-9280**.

### **About UMDNJ**

The University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey is the nation's largest freestanding public health sciences university, with more than 5,500 students attending. The state's three medical schools, a dental school, a graduate school of biomedical sciences, a school of health-related professions, a school of nursing and a school of public health are housed on five campuses — Newark, New Brunswick/Piscataway, Scotch Plains, Camden and Stratford. Annually, there are more than 2 million patient visits at UMDNJ facilities and faculty practices at the campuses. UMDNJ operates University Hospital, a level I trauma center in Newark, and University Behavioral HealthCare, a mental health and addiction services network.

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