



News from the Office of  
**ERIE COUNTY EXECUTIVE MARK POLONCARZ**

## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **Health Commissioner Dr. Gale Burstein**

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### **Generator Safety Awareness Saves Lives**

*Know the facts and how to safely use a generator during an emergency*

ERIE COUNTY, NY— The Erie County Department of Health (“ECDOH”) strongly encourages Erie County Residents to be aware of generator safety. “While generators are a great tool during power outages, there are specific dangers associated with their use” **said Erie County Health Commissioner Dr. Gale Burstein.** Understanding how to safely use a generator can save lives. Generators must always be used outdoors, never in a home.”

There are several options with regard to generator use. Residents may want to consider acquiring a generator that can provide enough power to run a furnace and, if necessary, a well pump during an extended power outage. Another reason to consider a generator is for back-up power to run essential medical equipment or just to keep a refrigerator and freezer running when the power goes out. Whatever the situation, it is important to size the unit correctly and follow the manufacturer’s recommendations for its safe operation.

As a portable unit, the generator can power electrical equipment and household appliances using heavy-duty, outdoor extension cords plugged directly into the generator. The extension cords should be checked frequently to make sure they do not become hot during operation.

Only a licensed electrician should install a generator to a household wiring system, either as a portable or permanent unit. An electrician should install a separate outdoor receptacle and double-pole, double-throw transfer switch to isolate the generator from the utility company's lines. This will prevent electrical backfeed from the generator which could harm utility workers repairing these lines. The power company should also be notified when a generator is installed .

## Helpful Hints: Generator Safety

- Consult with a licensed electrician to connect a generator to existing household wiring system and install all recommended safety devices.
- Notify the power company when a generator is installed.
- Never run a generator inside the home, basement or attached garage. Generators should only be operated outside. Carbon monoxide in the generator's fumes can build up and cause carbon monoxide poisoning, which can lead to death.
- Keep children away from generators at all times.
- Operate the generator in a dry outdoor location, away from open windows.
- Fuel spilled on a hot generator can cause an explosion. If a generator has a detachable fuel tank, it should be removed before refilling. If this is not possible, the generator should be shut off and allowed to cool before refilling.
- Gasoline should be stored away from the generator in proper storage containers and not in the home. Improper storage can cause explosions and/or fires.
- A generator's rated capacity should never be exceeded. Overloading a generator can damage it and any appliances connected to it. Fire may result. The manufacturer's instructions should always be followed.

Safe use of a generator has great value during power outages. ECDOH encourages everyone to know and understand the safety rules for operation of a generator.

For more information on generator safety, please visit the following websites:

Erie County Department of Health

<http://www2.erie.gov/health/index.php?q=don039t-be-left-dark>

U. S. Fire Administration (USFA)

<http://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/fswy24.pdf>

New York State Electric and Gas

<http://www.nyseg.com/MediaLibrary/2/5/Content%20Management/NYSEG/Usage%20and%20Safety/PDFs%20and%20Docs/nyseg%20EmergGennyseg.pdf>