Preventing Carbon Monoxide Poisoning While Working with Portable Generators

Working with portable generators can expose workers to carbon monoxide (CO), a colorless, odorless, and toxic gas. Follow these work practices to stay safe when using a portable generator:

- Inspect the generator for damage or loose fuel lines.
- Keep the generator dry, and maintain and operate it according to the manufacturer’s instructions.
- Never use a portable generator indoors, or in enclosed spaces such as garages, crawl spaces, and basements.
- Generators should be used outdoors, but never place a generator near doors, windows, or ventilation shafts where CO can enter and build up.
- Make sure the generator has 3 to 4 feet of clear space on all sides and above it to ensure adequate ventilation.
- If you or others show symptoms of CO poisoning—dizziness, headaches, nausea/vomiting, tiredness, confusion, unconsciousness—get to fresh air immediately and seek medical attention. Do not re-enter the area until it is determined to be safe by trained and properly equipped personnel.

OSHA’s On-Site Consultation Program provides no-cost and confidential occupational safety and health compliance assistance to small- and medium-sized businesses. Consultation services are separate from enforcement and do not result in penalties or citations. The OSHA Training Institute Education Centers offer courses for workers, employers, and managers on hazard recognition and abatement at convenient locations nationwide.