

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

MEDIA ALERT

Media Contacts:
800-222-1222 (800-962-1253 outside NJ)

New Jersey Enters 2014 with a Blast from Mother Nature -- Precautions Before, During, and After the Storm --

Steven Marcus, MD, Executive and Medical Director,
Bruce Ruck, Pharm.D., Director, Drug Information and Professional Education
New Jersey Poison Information and Education System (NJPIES)

Available for Interviews

(Newark, NJ) – January 2, 2014 —Will this storm turn out to be the winter version of Super Storm (akaHurricane) Sandy? Protect yourself and be prepared. The storm is expected to bring with it near blizzard conditions - significant snow accumulation, sub-zero wind chill and strong gusty winds resulting in snow drifts and possible power outages. During Hurricane Sandy and similar storms, the NJ Poison Experts helped manage many exposures to carbon monoxide poisoning. Major storms like the one we are expecting later today are known to result in deaths from hypothermia and carbon monoxide poisoning.

Carbon monoxide poisoning is often referred to as the Silent Killer because it is a gas that gives no warning – you can't see it, smell it or taste it. When the gas is breathed into the body it combines with the body's blood and prevents it from absorbing oxygen. Since this gas is easily detected with an installed and fully functional carbon monoxide detector, the NJ Poison experts highly recommend that everyone install carbon monoxide detectors in his or her home. Exposure to carbon monoxide can produce headaches, sleepiness, fatigue, confusion and irritability at low levels. At higher levels, it can result in 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.

Safety Tips to Prevent Carbon Monoxide Poisoning:

- Check the batteries in your carbon monoxide detector and smoke detector. If you don't have either detector, install before the storm hits
- Clear any snow accumulation from all outside dryer and heating vents.
- Remove snow from car exhaust pipe(s) before sitting in car and letting it warm up. Failure to remove snow can result in carbon monoxide poisoning. Be sure there is ample room for air to circulate behind your car to allow any exhaust to dissipate and not build up around your car.
- DO NOT bring a portable gas powered generator into the home or garage –
 - Do not place them outside near any open windows/doors
 - They should be at least 25 feet from any house.
- DO NOT bring other gas powered equipment, propane stoves, propane lights, or kerosene camping stoves into the house or garage.
- DO NOT heat your home with your stove.
- DO NOT cook with charcoal indoors or inside your house or garage.
- DO NOT idle a car in a closed garage. Once you pull in, immediately turn off the engine.
- Keep your home well ventilated. If need be, keep a window slightly cracked to allow air flow.
- During storm cleanup, keep all gas powered cleaning equipment outside away from the house when in use. Bringing and using them indoors could result in serious injury.

General Safety Tips:

- Have a flashlight with fresh batteries ready to use (you may have used the flashlight during Sandy, replace the batteries if you did).
 - Make sure to use a flashlight when giving or taking medication. Read all labels carefully.
- Have a battery-operated radio available and be sure the batteries are fresh.
- Risk for hypothermia increases with frigid temperatures. Infants, children, and the elderly are at greatest risk for hypothermia.
 - Signs and symptoms include headaches, sleepiness, fatigue, confusion and irritability, nausea, vomiting, irregular heartbeat, impaired vision and coordination, and death
 - Stay warm and dress appropriately! For prolonged exposure to cold, wear insulated or layered clothing that does not retain moisture. Wear a head cover!
 - Avoid over-exertion and excessive sweating in the cold. Snow shoveling is a very intense exercise. If you are not in top physical shape, don't attempt it yourself.
 - Warm beverages can help increase the body temperature.
 - Avoid drinking alcohol, especially in cold temperatures.
 - Some medications may increase your risk. Check with your doctor, pharmacist or call the Poison Control Center

Safety Tips to Prevent Food Spoilage during a Power Outage:

- In preparing for a power outage, make the temperature colder than usual on both freezers and refrigerators. This will prolong the cold after a power outage.
- During a power outage, keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed and open them only when necessary.
- Place a refrigerator thermometer in the center of the middle shelf and check the temperature. If it has risen to 40 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.
- Fill freezers to capacity, but refrigerators need room for air to circulate.
- When power is restored, allow time for the refrigerator to reach below 40 degrees Fahrenheit before restocking.
- "When in doubt, throw it out!"

If you suspect Carbon Monoxide Poisoning, Take Immediate Action:

1. If a loved one is unconscious or unresponsive, get them out of the house and call 911 immediately.
2. Exit the house/building immediately. Do not waste time opening windows to "air" it out; this will delay your escape and cause you to breathe in more dangerous fumes.
3. Contact your local fire department/energy provider.
4. Call the NJ Poison Experts, 800-222-1222, for immediate treatment advice. Do not waste time looking for information on the internet about carbon monoxide poisoning. Call us for fast, free and accurate information.

To prepare for tonight's storm, program the Poison Help Hotline (800-222-1222) into all phones NOW. If someone is unconscious, not breathing, seizing/convulsing, bleeding profusely, difficult to arouse/wake up, etc. call 911 immediately, otherwise call the **NJ Poison Experts at (1-800-222-1222)**. Remember, calls are free and confidential and help is always available 24 hrs a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year, even during bouts of Mother Nature. Call 800-222-1222 to speak with a NJ Poison Expert. Help is available in more than 150 languages.

Help is Just a Phone Call Away!

Don't waste valuable time looking up information on the Internet when every minute counts. "Many of the calls we get are genuine emergencies," said Dr. Steven Marcus, Executive and Medical Director of the NJ Poison Center. "Poisons and medicines may act very quickly. Having a poison expert give you exact instructions for your specific situation can help significantly during those critical first few minutes."

Real People. Real Answers.

About NJPIES

As New Jersey's only poison control center, the New Jersey Poison Information & Education System provides information on poison prevention and treatments. Chartered in 1983, NJPIES provides free consultation through telephone hot line 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 Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. NJPIES has a state-of-the-art center located on the school's Newark campus. NJPIES is funded, in part, by the NJ Department of Health and the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

New Jersey residents seeking immediate information about treating poison emergencies, and those with any drug information questions, should call the toll-free hot line, **800-222-1222**, any time. The hearing impaired may call **973-926-8008**. For more information, visit www.njpies.org or call **973-972-9280**.

About Rutgers

Established in 1766, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, is America's eighth oldest institution of higher learning and one of the nation's premier public research universities. Serving more than 65,000 students on campuses, centers, institutes and other locations throughout the state, Rutgers is the only public university in New Jersey that is a member of the prestigious Association of American Universities.

Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences (RBHS) is the health care education, research, and clinical division of Rutgers University, comprising nine schools and their attendant faculty practices, centers, institutes and clinics; New Jersey's leading comprehensive cancer care center; and New Jersey's largest behavioral health care network.

###