

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

MEDIA ALERT

Media Contacts:

800-222-1222 (800-962-1253 outside NJ)

Protect Yourself and Be Prepared

-- NJ Poison Experts Warn of Snow-Related Poisoning Exposures --

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Available for Interviews

(Newark, NJ) – January 26, 2015 — Dangerous conditions lay ahead for residents of the Garden State as they prepare for a massive winter storm expected later today into tomorrow. This storm is expected to cause extremely dangerous driving/traveling conditions – heavy snow with high accumulations; strong, gusty winds causing snow drifts; low visibility; slippery/icy roads; and frigid temperatures. The NJ Poison Experts have weathered all storms alongside residents (24 hours a day/7 days a week/365 days a year). From our experience with Super Storm Sandy, we learned a great deal about unintentional poisonings/exposures that may occur in the midst of severe weather.

"Major storms like the one we will be expecting later today into tomorrow are known to result in illness and even deaths from hypothermia and carbon monoxide poisoning, as well as exposures to a variety of substances," said Steven Marcus, MD, executive and medical director of the NJ Poison Center. Exposures to carbon monoxide often happen when people attempt to heat their homes by using space heaters and portable generators that run on kerosene, propane, or natural gas without proper ventilation. The danger occurs when too much carbon monoxide gets trapped inside an area that is poorly ventilated.

Keep in mind, high winds can result in power outages across the state. If power is lost it may be lost for an extensive period of time and your cell phone may become your lifeline! "Remember, the experts are hard at work responding to your calls for help, 24/7/365," said Dr. Marcus. Protecting yourself and being prepared is half the battle when dealing with such intense weather.

"We learned from Super Storm Sandy how important a fully charged cell phone can be when dealing with severe weather," said Marcus. "To prepare for this storm, program the Poison Help Hotline (800-222-1222) into all phones (home, cell, office) now." Keep your cell phone charged whenever possible.

Below you will find key safety tips and prevention precautions that may potentially save your life or the life of a loved ones.

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.

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.

General Safety Tips:

- Have a flashlight with fresh batteries ready to use (you may have used the flashlight during previous storms including Hurricane 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:

- With the 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.
- 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.
- If it looks funny, smells funny or if you are just unsure, "When in doubt, throw it out!"

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 Marcus. Poisons 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.

Help is Just a Phone Call Away!

We are social. Join us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/njpies) and Twitter ([@NJPoisonCenter](https://twitter.com/NJPoisonCenter)) for breaking news, safety tips, trivia questions, etc. Share what you learn with your family (including children), friends, and coworkers.

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.

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