

# Florida Public Service Commission

## Consumer E-Newsletter

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**Chairman**  
**Lisa Polak Edgar**

Hurricanes are a fact of life in Florida. According to a recent study by the [Coastal High Hazard Study Committee](#), Florida has the greatest probability of any state in the nation to experience the landfall of a major—Category 3 or higher—hurricane.

During the past two years, Florida has experienced an unprecedented level of tropical storm activity. To prepare for the 2006 Hurricane Season, Governor Bush initiated a comprehensive plan to instill a “culture of preparedness” in Florida.

We at the Florida Public Service Commission understand the power of hurricanes and the impact they have had on our state’s utilities and their communities. We have seen firsthand how the work of Florida’s utilities impact our daily lives.

### Florida, Be Prepared

The Florida Public Service Commission recommends that you use the following checklist to be prepared in the case of power outages and other utility service interruptions during extreme weather events:

- Stock up on nonperishable foods (canned meats and vegetables), medicines, supplies, and pet food if you have pets.
- Keep a working radio, flashlights, extra batteries, candles and oil lamps. Check regularly to ensure that they are working.
- Store drinking water in clean bottles. You may also use jugs, pans, and the bathtub if a major storm appears imminent.
- If someone in your home depends on electric-powered, life-sustaining medical equipment, check with your utility on backup facilities well in advance.
- Make special arrangements for the care of infants, the elderly, and the physically impaired.
- Learn the evacuation route for your area and keep your car fueled up in case an evacuation is ordered.
- Keep a list of emergency phone numbers for police, fire, utility, and paramedic assistance.
- Keep a small amount of cash on hand, since an extended power outage may prevent you from withdrawing money from automated teller machines or banks.
- Call relatives, neighbors, or local emergency officials if you anticipate needing a place to stay.
- To prevent overloading when power is restored, turn off all major electric appliances.

### Service Restoration Priority

If you are without power after a hurricane, remember, your electric company’s service restoration goal is to find and repair damages that will safely restore power to the most customers in the least amount of time.

The following is the company’s order of service restoration:

- First, the utility repairs damages to power plants and transmission lines that either produce or transport electricity to the community;
- Second, the utility restores main power lines that deliver electricity to hospitals, nursing homes, police and fire stations, and radio and television stations;
- Third, the utility restores service to communities that have the greatest number of customers without power;

### What Does The Public Service Commission Do?

The Florida Public Service Commission oversees telephone service in Florida and also sets the rates utility companies may charge for natural gas and electricity. The PSC sets the price consumers pay for water in 36 Florida counties.

#### Need Discounted Phone Service?



Learn More About  
Lifeline Assistance  
& Link-Up Florida

#### Utility Problems? File An Online Complaint



#### Have Questions? Visit our FAQ's



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During the past year, Florida's utilities have been busy preparing for the upcoming hurricane season, which officially began on June 1, so they will have the ability to respond quickly in the aftermath of a storm and recover quickly from the damage. We have been preparing with them, and we want to help you - the consumer - be prepared, too.

Prepared consumers are better equipped to provide for the safety of their families, reduce damage to their homes, and recover more quickly from a disaster.

- Fourth, the utility restores service to small groups of customers, and to individuals.

For more information, contact the Florida Public Service Commission at 1-800-342-3552 or visit us on the web at [www.floridapsc.com](http://www.floridapsc.com).

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## Portable Generator Hazards Consumer Product Safety Commission Safety Alert

Portable generators are useful when temporary or remote electric power is needed, but they also can be hazardous. The primary hazards to avoid when using a generator are carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning from the toxic engine exhaust, electric shock or electrocution, and fire.

Every year, people die in incidents related to portable generator use. Most of the incidents associated with portable generators reported to the [Consumer Product Safety Commission](#) (CPSC) involve people being poisoned by CO from generators used indoors or in partially-enclosed spaces.

### Carbon Monoxide (CO) Hazards

**NEVER** use a generator in enclosed or partially-enclosed spaces. Generators can produce high levels of CO very quickly. When you use a portable generator, remember that you cannot smell or see CO. Even if you can't smell exhaust fumes, you may still be exposed to CO.

If you start to feel sick, dizzy, or weak while using a generator, get to fresh air **RIGHT AWAY. DO NOT DELAY.** The CO from generators can rapidly lead to a person's full incapacitation and death.

If you experience serious symptoms, get medical attention immediately. Inform medical staff that CO poisoning is suspected. If you experienced symptoms while indoors, have someone call the fire department to determine when it is safe to re-enter the building.

Follow these safety tips to protect against CO poisoning:

- **NEVER** use a generator indoors, including in homes, garages, basements, crawl spaces, and other enclosed or partially-enclosed areas, even with ventilation. Opening doors and windows or using fans will not prevent CO build-up in the home.
- Follow the instructions that come with your generator. Locate the unit outdoors and away from doors, windows, and vents that could allow CO to come indoors.
- Install battery-operated CO alarms or plug-in CO alarms with battery back-up in your home, according to the manufacturer's installation instructions. The CO alarms should be certified to the requirements of the latest safety standards for CO alarms (UL 2034, IAS 6-96, or CSA 6.19.01).
- Test your CO alarms frequently and replace dead batteries.

### Electrical Hazards

Follow these tips to protect against shock and electrocution:

- Keep the generator dry and do not use in rain or wet conditions. To protect from moisture, operate it on a dry surface un-

der an open, canopy-like structure. Don't touch the generator with wet hands.

- Plug appliances directly into the generator. Or, use a heavy duty, outdoor-rated extension cord that is rated (in watts or amps) at least equal to the sum of the connected appliance loads. Check that the entire cord is free of cuts or tears and that the plug has all three prongs, especially a grounding pin.
- **NEVER try to power the house wiring by plugging the generator into a wall outlet, a practice known as “back-feeding.”** This is an extremely dangerous practice that presents an electrocution risk to utility workers and neighbors served by the same utility transformer. It also bypasses some of the built-in household circuit protection devices.
- If you must connect the generator to the house wiring to power appliances, have a qualified electrician install the appropriate equipment in accordance with local electrical codes. Or, check with your utility company to see if it can install an appropriate power transfer switch. Unchecked power can flow back on to the system causing injury or death to workers.
- For power outages, permanently installed stationary generators are better suited for providing backup power to the home. Even a properly connected portable generator can become overloaded. This may result in overheating or stressing the generator components, possibly leading to a generator failure.

### Fire Hazards

Follow these tips to prevent fires:

- Never store fuel for your generator in the home. Gasoline, propane, kerosene, and other flammable liquids should be stored outside of living areas in properly-labeled, non-glass safety containers. Do not store them near a fuel-burning appliance, such as a natural gas water heater in a garage. If the fuel is spilled or the container is not sealed properly, invisible vapors from the fuel can travel along the ground and can be ignited by the appliance's pilot light or by arcs from electric switches in the appliance.
  - Before refueling the generator, turn it off and let it cool down. Gasoline spilled on hot engine parts could ignite.
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