



N A R U C  
National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners

July 7, 2014

Chairs of All State Commissions

**RE: Commission Support for Educating Consumers on Portable Generator Carbon Monoxide Safety**

Dear Colleague:

Summer is in full swing, meaning severe weather, including hurricanes, tornados, and damaging storms, can strike and knock out power to our consumers. This offers an opportunity to educate our citizens on how to safely utilize portable generating units during such outages.

As expressed in a NARUC resolution approved last year, portable generation can be extremely beneficial to families and communities impacted by severe weather. These units can provide heat in the winter and cooling in the summer, as well as supply light and keep food from spoiling. They can be extremely hazardous and even life-threatening if not used properly. Carbon monoxide is especially dangerous because it is tasteless, colorless and odorless. Consumer education is the key to safety.

NARUC members are well positioned to play a major role in educating consumers. We regularly work with utilities and local organizations to provide informational materials and consumers forums on a wide range of utility issues – especially those related to public safety.

With help from Sandra Sloane of New York and Lisa Colosimo of Ohio, the NARUC Staff Subcommittee on Consumer Affairs worked closely with the Portable Generator Manufacturers' Association and developed easy-to-understand model portable generator carbon monoxide safety information. This is part of a broader public awareness campaign to supplement other available safety materials addressing this and other potential hazards. These simple illustrations are provided in both English and Spanish to increase public awareness of unsafe uses as well as ways to safely use portable generators. Attached to this email, you will find these two illustrations.

In the resolution, we urge our members to educate consumers on this important topic by making available these easy to understand illustrations. We hope each of you will participate in this effort on this important, and potentially life threatening, issue.

Please make available the portable generator safety materials to consumers in your State by posting them on your website and distributing them at community events. NARUC has created a page on portable generator carbon monoxide safety on the NARUC website where you can access the model safety information and our resolution: <http://www.naruc.org/resources.cfm?p=561>.

We also encourage you to work with your local utilities to have them post this important safety information on their websites, distribute it as a bill insert as well as use other methods to educate their customers on carbon monoxide safety.

Please join our commissions and NARUC in promoting safe use of portable generators and help prevent carbon monoxide poisoning in your community. If you have questions, please contact Brian O'Hara at NARUC (202-898-2205 or [bohara@naruc.org](mailto:bohara@naruc.org)). A copy of NARUC's resolution is appended below.

Sincerely,



Colette D. Honorable  
President, NARUC



Brandon Presley  
Chair, Committee on Consumer Affairs

Attachment

***Resolution Recognizing the Importance of Educating Consumers on Portable Generator Carbon Monoxide Safety***

**WHEREAS**, Utility consumers often use portable generators during a power outage; *and*

**WHEREAS**, Portable generator engines are often powered by fuel sources that result in the emission of air pollutants, and the operation of these generators are subject to environmental regulation in a number of States; *and*

**WHEREAS**, Portable generators used to restore power can be extremely hazardous and even life threatening when not properly operated; *and*

**WHEREAS**, Portable generators powered by small engines emit potentially harmful carbon monoxide gas. If carbon monoxide is not allowed to exhaust from the engine in a safe manner, harmful effects, even death can occur in a matter of minutes; *and*

**WHEREAS**, Carbon monoxide is especially dangerous because it is tasteless, colorless and odorless and people may be unaware they are being exposed; *and*

**WHEREAS**, State commissions and utilities should provide information to consumers on the safe operation of portable generators including operating them outside, far away from windows, doors and vents to reduce the risk of carbon monoxide gas from accumulating and potentially being drawn toward occupied spaces where it can quickly build up and linger for hours, even after the generator has shut off; *and*

**WHEREAS**, Portable generators should not be run inside homes, garages, basements, sheds, or other partially enclosed spaces even if using fans or opening doors and windows for ventilation and should be placed downwind with the engine exhaust pointed away from occupied spaces; *and*

**WHEREAS**, The Portable Generator Manufacturers Association (PGMA), working with the Staff Subcommittee on Consumer Affairs, has developed important model portable generator carbon monoxide safety information as part of a broader public awareness campaign and to supplement other available safety materials addressing this and other potential portable generator hazards; *and*

**WHEREAS**, This model information can be easily understood by consumers; and utility companies can help improve safety awareness of the public by posting information on their websites, distributing a bill insert or utilizing other methods to communicate and educate customers; *and*

**WHEREAS**, The information should be available in both English and Spanish to reach the maximum number of utility consumers; *and*

**WHEREAS**, During the tornado and hurricane seasons it is especially important that consumers use their portable generators in a safe manner; *now, therefore be it*

**RESOLVED**, That the Board of Directors of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners, convened at its 2013 Summer Meetings in Denver, Colorado, urges utilities and other entities to post portable generator carbon monoxide safety information on their websites and make available this information to consumers; *and be it further*

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**RESOLVED**, That recognizing the important role that State Public Utility Commissions have in providing educational information to consumers, NARUC urges all Commissions to make this important safety information available on their websites and available to consumers and urge operators of portable generators to understand the potential hazards, and environmental compliance measures related to portable generator operation.

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*Sponsored by the Committee on Consumer Affairs and the Committee on Energy Resources and the Environment*

*Adopted by the NARUC Board of Directors July 24, 2013*