



## **Hurricane Aftermath—Health and Housing Carbon Monoxide Poisoning**

Carbon monoxide is a serious health threat to residents returning home following hurricanes and flooding, especially those who live in houses and apartment buildings that use natural gas for heating and cooking. Carbon monoxide can kill through asphyxiation and exposure to sub-lethal doses over time can cause brain and heart damage.

To avoid carbon monoxide poisoning, residents should take the following steps:

- Do not use gasoline-powered generators, open flame camp stoves and lanterns, or charcoal or gas grills in any building. Unvented combustion devices can cause rapid and dangerous increases in carbon monoxide concentrations in indoor air.
- Be sure outdoor generators are operated more than ten feet away from windows, doors, and other openings to houses and apartment buildings.
- If at all possible, buy and install a carbon monoxide detector, commonly available at local hardware stores that have reopened.
- If dizziness, nausea, or weakness present themselves at any time during the course of building repair and cleanup, **seek fresh air immediately**. If symptoms persist, contact emergency medical personnel.

Property owners should:

- Check and, if necessary, repair all damaged water heaters, furnaces, and other combustion appliances such as natural gas-powered ovens and stoves.
- Repair any damaged vents and chimneys, and be sure that all vents and chimneys are clear of debris or other obstructions.

### **Resources**

- For more information on making homes healthy following a hurricane strike, visit the EPA's Hurricane Katrina response page, linked from [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov).
- The Alliance for Healthy Homes and the National Center for Healthy Housing provide more detailed information on health and housing on their websites, [www.afhh.org](http://www.afhh.org) and [www.centerforhealthyhousing.org](http://www.centerforhealthyhousing.org).