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Food Trucks Need Portable Generators. They Don't Need Generator Sheds.

*Portable Generators Manufacturers' Association warns
against enclosures that can trap CO exhaust*

April 29, 2025—Food trucks have increased in presence and popularity all across the U.S. In bustling urban downtowns, it's not unusual to see a dozen or more parked on streets at mealtime. They've expanded their reach into the suburbs, setting up temporary shop in the parking lots of any mall, shopping center, or business willing to host them.

Even though most food truck operators utilize propane gas to fuel their cooking equipment, they still rely on portable generators to provide temporary power for lighting, refrigeration, point-of-sale systems, wi-fi, and more. Normally, these portable generators are placed right outside the rear of the truck, angled away from primary foot traffic. However, in the congested settings in which most trucks thrive, these generators often end up pointing at something ...or somewhere...where people go.



To cut down on noise, food trucks sometimes employ “generator sheds” to at least partially surround their portable generators. Because this is an unsafe and dangerous practice, the Portable Generator Manufacturers’ Association (PGMA) does not recommend the use of generator sheds.

“Running a generator inside any enclosed space, even a generator shed, poses a serious risk of carbon monoxide buildup due to the lack of ventilation, making the practice extremely dangerous,” said Guillermo Rodriguez, Harbor Freight, spokesman for PGMA. Carbon monoxide (CO), emitted in generator exhaust, is a poisonous gas that cannot be seen or smelled. It is referred to as the “silent killer,” because illness can occur within minutes of continual inhalation.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include, but are not limited to, headache, dizziness, nausea, fatigue, and disorientation. If you are experiencing any of these while operating a generator, seek fresh air and medical attention immediately.

“The food truck safety fact sheet from the National Fire Protection Association recommends placing a portable generator a minimum of 12 feet in all directions from openings and air intakes,” said Mr. Rodriguez. “And, obviously, it should never be operated inside the food truck.”

PGMA also encourages the purchase and use of portable generators that meet ANSI/PGMA G300-2018 or later safety standard requirements, which include built-in CO shut-off systems to protect against dangerous

carbon monoxide levels. Food trucks should also have a secondary CO detector within the truck for added protection.

Portable generator sheds aren't just being used alongside food trucks; many homeowners are unsafely adding them outside their houses, usually placed right outside the residence directly against an exterior wall. This is a serious violation of portable generator safety, as a generator should always be operated far from windows, doors, vents, or other openings of the building and should never be enclosed, even partially, by any enclosure while in use.

PGMA has a website exclusively dedicated to portable generator safety information. It can be found at <https://www.takeyourgeneratoroutside.com/>.

About PGMA

The Portable Generator Manufacturers' Association (PGMA) is a trade association that seeks to develop and influence safety and performance standards for our industry's products. The Association is also dedicated to educating consumers and tradespersons on the safe use of portable generators and has developed the Take it Outside® campaign to support its mission. Formed in 2009, PGMA members include major manufacturers of portable generators sold in North America and a significant majority of the industry. www.pgmaonline.com.

Member companies include: American Honda Motor Co., Champion Power Equipment, DuroMax Power Equipment, Firman Power Equipment, Generac Power Systems, Harbor Freight Tools USA, Inc., JD North America, and associate members, Figaro USA, Inc., GenTent Safety Canopies, and Nemoto Sensor Engineering.

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