FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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RE: Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Risks

The recent ice storm and subsequent power outages have many Genesee County families using alternative methods to heat their homes. The Genesee County Health Department is urging residents affected by the power outages to be aware of the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning and what steps to take to prevent it.

Carbon monoxide is an invisible, tasteless, and odorless gas formed when fuel is burned, that can build up to deadly levels within minutes in enclosed spaces. Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are headaches, nausea, confusion, vomiting, chest pain, and shortness of breath. Genesee County families are encouraged to follow these carbon monoxide poisoning prevention tips:

- Never use generators, grills, camp stoves, or other gasoline or charcoal burning devices inside of homes, basements, garages or near a window. These appliances give off carbon monoxide which can build up quickly in a home.
• Do not use a cooktop or oven to heat their home as these appliances are not designed for this purpose and may result in carbon monoxide poisonings.
• Ensure your home has a battery operated carbon monoxide detector, which are available at local home improvement and retail stores.

In 2011 alone, there were 22 unintentional deaths and 934 non-fatal unintentional carbon monoxide poisonings in Michigan. Of those, 98 people were poisoned from carbon monoxide produced by generators and 23 from using a cooktop or oven as a heating source.

If carbon monoxide poisoning is suspected, get fresh air immediately and call 911. If the power is out for an extended period of time, residents should also:
• Discard any potentially hazardous food (meat, dairy, eggs, cut melons, and cooked vegetables) that has been above 41º F for four hours or more, reached a temperature of 45º F or higher for any length of time, or has an unusual color, odor, or texture.
• Wear layers of clothing to help keep in body heat.
• Avoid power lines, objects in contact with power lines, and the use of electric tools and appliances to prevent electrical shock.

For more information about carbon monoxide poisoning and poisoning prevention, visit www.gchd.us.
To learn more about safety precautions during a power outage, visit http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/poweroutage/.