



U.S. CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION
4330 EAST WEST HIGHWAY
BETHESDA, MARYLAND 20814-4408

Record of Commission Action
Commissioners Voting by Ballot*

Commissioners Voting: Acting Chairman Nancy A. Nord
 Commissioner Thomas H. Moore

ITEM:

Final Rule: Labeling Requirements for Portable Generators
(Briefing package dated December 29, 2006, OS No. 5717)

DECISION:

The Commission voted unanimously (2-0) to approve with changes the draft regulatory text and preamble for the portable generator rule for publication in the *Federal Register (FR)*. The Commission is issuing a final rule requiring manufacturers to label portable generators with performance and technical data related to performance and safety. The required warning label informs purchasers that: "Using a generator indoors CAN KILL YOU IN MINUTES;" "Generator exhaust contains carbon monoxide. This is a poison you cannot see or smell;" "NEVER use inside a home or garage, EVEN IF doors and windows are open;" "Only use OUTSIDE and far away from windows, doors, and vents." The warning label also includes pictograms. The Commission believes that providing this safety information will help reduce unreasonable risks of injury associated with portable generators.

Acting Chairman Nord and Commissioner Moore submitted the attached statements to accompany their votes.

For the Commission:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Todd A. Stevenson".

Todd A. Stevenson
Secretary

* Ballot vote due January 4, 2007

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE NANCY A. NORD
ACTING CHAIRMAN
U.S. CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION**

**BALLOT VOTE
(FINAL RULE FOR LABELING REQUIREMENTS
FOR PORTABLE GENERATORS)**

January 4, 2007

The demand for portable generators has increased greatly in recent years. So too have the number of people who have been killed or sickened by carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning from the improper use of those generators. Portable generators are extremely useful machines, particularly after the loss of electricity in the wake of a storm or other unforeseen circumstance. However, the amount of CO emitted from a portable generator can be several hundred times that released by a modern car's exhaust and can kill consumers in a very short period of time. Consumers need to be adequately warned of the hazards posed by the improper use of a portable generator.

Today I am voting to promulgate a final rule that requires all portable generators sold in the United States to bear an explicit warning label that will better advise consumers about the very real danger of CO poisoning posed by the use of a portable generator in or near a home. The final rule requires labeling that uses explicit language that warns, "Using a generator indoors CAN KILL YOU IN MINUTES," and "NEVER use inside a home or garage, EVEN IF doors and windows are open," as well as other pertinent safety warnings. Providing this safety information will convey to consumers the CO hazard associated with generators and instructions on how to avoid the hazard. The deaths resulting from CO poisoning from improper portable generator use are preventable, and this warning label is an important step towards eliminating these tragic, but avoidable, deaths in the future.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE THOMAS H. MOORE
ON THE FINAL RULE REGARDING
LABELING REQUIREMENTS FOR PORTABLE GENERATORS**

January 4, 2007

I am voting today to issue a final rule for labeling requirements for portable generators. This vote today concludes a process that involved excellent Commission staff work and is an important beginning step toward improvements in the safe use and operation of portable generators.

The Commission staff concluded several years ago that the warning labels on portable generators were not as clear or as strong as they could be about the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning related to operating portable generators in or near living spaces. Staff worked in the voluntary standards arena, through Underwriters Laboratories (UL), to make changes to the labeling requirements, as well as to the operation of the generators themselves. When this process stalled, UL took it upon itself to impose new labeling requirements for generators bearing the UL certification mark. But this is not a consensus standard and it is unclear how many currently marketed generators bear the new UL warning label.

The Commission's broader and more comprehensive review of the existing portable generator safety measures could take a considerable amount of time to reach a conclusion. There remain inconsistencies in generator operations which the label cannot cure, such as, the inability to use generators in the very circumstances—wet conditions—in which they are most likely to be needed, and instructions to use a short extension cord, which can have the effect of placing the generator too close to the house for safe operation. But while we are working on the other issues relating to generator safety, we should do what we can to try to stem the rising tide of deaths from portable generators. Therefore, I think that today's action to mandate improved warning labeling could be one important step in enhancing generator safety.

As a matter of course, we will take another look at the labeling of generators in the context of the broader generator safety rulemaking. If fundamental changes are proposed to the generators themselves, it could certainly have an impact on future generator labeling requirements.