



February, 15, 2007

Office of the Secretary  
Consumer Product Safety Commission  
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**Comments of Consumers Union of the U.S. Inc.,  
and Consumer Federation of America to the  
Consumer Product Safety Commission on  
16 CFR Chapter II  
“Portable Generators; Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking;  
Request for Comments and Information”  
Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking**

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**Introduction**

Consumers Union (CU), publisher of *Consumer Reports*, and Consumer Federation of America (CFA), submit the following comments in response to the Consumer Product Safety Commission’s (“CPSC” or “Commission”) request for comments and information in the above Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (“ANPR”).<sup>1</sup>

CU and CFA commend the Commission for its attention to this important consumer safety issue. We believe that the labeling provisions mandated in the final rule<sup>2</sup> published January 12, 2007 (“Final Labeling Rule”) is a good first step in attempting to reduce the number of carbon monoxide (“CO”) poisoning deaths caused by consumers operating portable generators in garages or other enclosed areas. In addition, we support the CPSC’s consumer outreach and education through communications through its web page entitled, “**Generator Danger Warning**”<sup>3</sup> and related links, informing consumers of the many dangers relating to generators.

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<sup>1</sup> “Portable Generators; Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking; Request for Comments and Information,” 71 Fed. Reg. 74472 (December 12, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> “Portable Generators; Final Rule; Labeling Requirements,” 72 Fed. Reg. 1443 (January 12, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.cpsc.gov/generator.html>

However, as CU stated in its comments filed in response to the request for comments that resulted in the Final Rule, CU and CFA strongly believe that the steady increase in generator-related carbon monoxide poisoning clearly demonstrates that education and warnings alone are not enough to protect consumers.

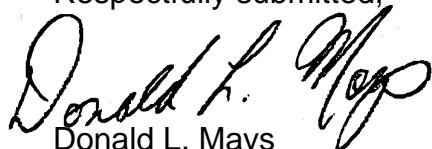
### **CU and CFA Recommendations**

The effectiveness of a label, no matter how well designed, depends on the consumer's ability to read, comprehend, and follow its directions. In most situations in which a portable generator is used, consumers are operating them in the dark, possibly during a storm, while under pressure to act quickly to make the unit work. Such conditions are not conducive to reading a label or understanding its guidance. We therefore believe that the most effective way to reduce injury and deaths from CO poisoning would be for all manufacturers to equip generators with a CO detector that will automatically shut down the unit if it detects dangerous levels of CO. Many generators on the market today have a similar automatic shut off system designed to cut off the equipment when it senses that the machine is low on oil. In addition, quality CO sensing devices are readily available and have already proven effective in preventing CO poisoning. Furthermore, the CPSC has itself demonstrated proof-of-concept of CO detection safety systems on portable generators in its own labs.<sup>4</sup> We applaud the Commission for its work in this area and strongly urge the CPSC to proceed quickly to require CO detection and automatic shut-off safety mechanisms on all portable generators.

### **Conclusion**

We appreciate the opportunity to share our views on this important proposed rule to increase the safe use of portable generators. We strongly urge the Commission to move quickly to mandate that manufacturers equip all portable generators with an automatic CO sensor and safety shut-off feature.

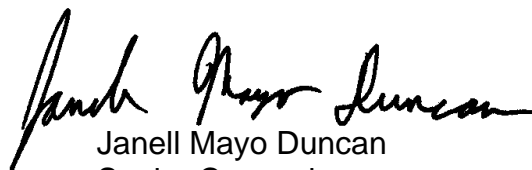
Respectfully submitted,



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<sup>4</sup> ICPHSO tour of CPSC labs on, or about, May 10, 2006.