

Generator Safety

Portable generators are a good source of alternate power if an outage occurs, but they should only be used in emergency situations. If a generator is improperly installed or improperly operated it can be deadly. If your emergency situation requires that a generator be connected to your home, have a qualified, licensed electrician connect it to the home's main electrical supply. Generators are dangerous to work with; power from generators can backfeed along power lines and electrocute anyone who comes into contact with them. Notify your electric cooperative before you have an electrician connect your portable generator.

Before operating a generator, determine wattage requirements. Never exceed the rated capacity of your generator; overloading can cause serious damage to the generator or appliances. List all of the appliances that are going to operate at the same time, and then determine the starting wattage requirements and the running wattage requirements. The starting load lasts only for a few seconds but is very important when figuring your total wattage to be used. Your generator must be rated to handle the total wattage.

Keep the following tips in mind as you set-up and operator a generator:

Electrical Hazards

- If it is necessary to connect a generator, make sure to have a qualified, licensed electrician install the appropriate equipment.
- Make sure the unit is connected to an appropriate electrical ground, in accordance with the National Electric Code. Follow directions supplied with the generator.
- Operate the generator in a clean, dry, well-ventilated area. Make sure your hands are dry, and do not use it in rainy, wet or icy conditions.
- Inspect extension cords before use. If they are worn, cut or frayed, have them replaced before use!
- Make sure not to overload the generator.
- Make sure to turn off all of the equipment being powered by the generator prior before turning off the generator.

Carbon Monoxide Hazards

- Always use generators outdoors and away from doors, windows and vents.
- Never use generators in homes, garages, basements, crawl spaces or other enclosed or partially enclosed areas, even with ventilation.
- Install battery-operated or plug-in (with battery backup) carbon monoxide (CO) alarms in your home.
- Make sure to test the CO alarms frequently and to replace batteries when they are needed.

Fire Hazards

- Before refueling the generator, make sure to turn it off and to let it cool. Fuel spilled on hot engine parts could ignite.
- Always store fuel in properly labeled, non-glass containers.
- Store fuel away from any fuel-burning appliances.
- Do not store fuel indoors.
- Never tamper with factory set engine speed settings. This could cause overheating and result in a fire.