

Portable Generator Safety Tips

Having a portable generator is useful when the power goes out, but generators can be hazardous if not used properly. The primary hazards to avoid when using them are carbon monoxide poisoning, electric shock and fire.

To avoid carbon monoxide hazards:

- Always use generators outdoors, 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.
- Follow manufacturer's instructions.
- Install battery-operated or plug-in (with battery backup) carbon monoxide (CO) alarms in your home.
- Test CO alarms often and replace batteries when needed.

To avoid electrical hazards:

- If connecting a generator to house wiring to power appliances, have a qualified electrician install appropriate equipment.
- Keep the generator dry. Operate on a dry surface under an open canopy-like structure.
- Dry your hands before touching the generator.
- Plug appliances directly into generator or use a heavy duty outdoor rated extension cord. Make sure the entire extension cord is free of cuts or tears and the plug has all three prongs, especially a grounding plug.
- NEVER plug the generator into a wall outlet. This practice, known as backfeeding, can cause an electrocution risk to utility workers and others served by the same utility transformer.

To avoid fire hazards:

- Before refueling the generator, turn it off and let it cool. Fuel spilled on hot engine parts could ignite.
- Always store fuel outside of living areas in properly labeled non-glass containers.