

USE YOUR GENERATOR SAFELY



Portable generators are a godsend during a prolonged electrical outage. Your cooperative urges its members to exercise extreme caution when operating portable generators.

Avoid 'Backfeeding'

- Never try to power the house wiring by plugging the generator into a wall outlet, a dangerous practice known as “backfeeding.” It sends power from your house back through electric lines. Safely connecting a generator to your house wiring requires the help of a professional electrician. Backfeeding could ruin appliances, cause a fire, or even injure a co-op employee

who might be working on nearby lines. Do not connect the generator to the house wiring in order to power appliances unless a qualified electrician has installed the appropriate equipment in accordance with local electrical codes.

- Plug appliances directly into the generator, or use a heavy-duty, outdoor-rated extension cord that is rated (in watts or amps) at least equal to the sum of the connected appliance loads. Check that the entire cord is free of cuts or tears and that the plug has all three prongs. Never remove the grounding pin.
- Keep the generator dry and do not use in rainy or wet conditions. Operate it on a dry surface under an open, canopy-like structure. Make sure your hands are dry before touching the generator.
- For power outages, permanently installed stationary generators are better suited for providing backup power to the home.

DANGER FROM CARBON MONOXIDE AND FIRE

Carbon Monoxide Gas

Never use a generator in enclosed or partially enclosed spaces. Generators can produce high levels of carbon monoxide gas (CO) very quickly, which you cannot smell or see. Even if you can't smell exhaust fumes, you may still be exposed to CO. If you start to feel sick, dizzy or weak while using a generator, get to fresh air right away. The CO from generators can rapidly lead to full incapacitation and death.

- If you experience serious symptoms, get medical attention immediately. Inform medical staff that CO poisoning is suspected. If you experience symptoms while indoors, have someone call the fire department to determine when it is safe to re-enter the building.
- If you use a portable generator you should install CO alarms, test them frequently, and replace dead batteries.

Fire Hazards

Gasoline, propane, kerosene and other flammable liquids should be stored outside of living areas in properly labeled, nonglass safety containers.

- Do not store them near a fuel-burning appliance, such as a natural gas water heater. If the fuel is spilled or the container is not sealed properly, invisible vapors from the fuel can travel along the ground and can be ignited by the appliance's pilot light or by arcs from electric switches in the appliance.
- Before refueling the generator, turn it off and let it cool down. Gasoline spilled on hot engine parts could ignite.