

# Safety FIRST

## BUYING A PORTABLE GENERATOR?

STAY  
CONNECTED

# Safely



Complacency around portable electric generators is deadly. Following these safety precautions can help keep you and your family safe while you wait for the power to come back on.

- NEVER operate a generator in enclosed or partially enclosed spaces, including homes, garages and basements. Generators produce high levels of carbon monoxide – a colorless, odorless, deadly gas – very quickly. It's a good idea to install carbon monoxide detectors in your home. That way, if carbon monoxide enters your home and poses a health risk, the alarm will sound a warning to you. Adequate ventilation is necessary and proper refueling practices as described in your owners manual must be followed. Make sure fuel for the generator is stored safely, away from living areas, in properly labeled containers, and away from fuel burning appliances. Before re-fueling, always turn the generator off and let it cool down.
- Keep the generator dry. To protect it from moisture, operate it on a dry surface under an open canopy-like structure.
- 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.
- When using an appliance or tool at a considerable distance from the generator, a 3-wire extension cord that has a 3-blade grounding plug and a 3-slot receptacle that accepts the tools plug should be used.
- Under no circumstances should an extension cord be run from one house to another to help out a neighbor in a storm situation.
- Do not connect your generator directly to your household wiring, as this can backfeed along the power lines and electrocute or kill anyone coming in contact with the lines, including neighbors, yourself and lineworkers making repairs. If you must connect your generator in this manner, contact URE for the installation of a transfer switch.
- Make sure your generator is properly grounded.
- Never exceed the rated capacity of your generator. Overloading can cause serious damage to your generator or appliances. A portable generator should be used only to power essential equipment or appliances. Before purchasing a generator, list all of the appliances that are going to operate at the same time. Then determine the starting wattage requirements and the running wattage requirements. It's very important that a properly sized generator be used and not calculating the load before purchase can lead to undersizing. Wattage requirements vary with different brands of appliances. Be sure to check the name plate on the appliances you plan to use. Always start your largest electric motor first, then plug in other items one at a time.
- Make sure any generator you purchase is listed with Underwriters Laboratory (UL) and/or Factory Mutual (FM).
- Turn off all appliances powered by the generator before shutting down the generator.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for safe operation and maintenance.
- Keep children away from portable generators at all times.



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# TIPS to Safety

## OPERATE A PORTABLE GENERATOR

Your electric Cooperative recommends following these portable electric generator safety precautions to avoid dangerous situations.

For these and other electrical safety tips, visit the Union Rural Electric website at [www.ure.com](http://www.ure.com) or call (937) 642-1826

Sources: ESFI, North Carolina Assn. of Electric Cooperatives, Inc. and Butler Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

As consumer reliance on electricity has increased, tolerance for power outages has declined. To combat the havoc wreaked by ice storms, thunderstorms and high winds, many homeowners turn to portable electric generators.

According to The Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) portable electric generators are a good source of power for heat, light, refrigeration and cooking during electrical outages. But, if used improperly, they can kill both you and the people who are restoring power to your building. People die needlessly every year in accidents that involve portable electric generators. Safety awareness can prevent those deaths.

You can use a portable generator to supply electricity to your appliances if an emergency exists during a power outage.

Home emergency generators are usually powered by gasoline, which must be properly handled, as well.

Generator sizes vary. Common units can be from 8 to 14 horsepower and capable of handling from 4,000 to 8,400 watts (including starting surge requirements).

Prices may range from \$800 to \$3,000. Connecting a generator to the main electrical supply for your house requires a transfer switch and the services of a qualified, licensed electrician.

For everyone's safety, notify your electric cooperative if you own a generator.

*Information in this brochure is for informational purposes only and should not be construed as a "how-to" guide. Before undertaking any electrical project, we strongly urge you to seek the assistance of a qualified professional electrician.*



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## WARNING

If you connect a portable electric generator to the main electrical supply coming into the house, the electric generator could feed back into your electric Cooperative's system and kill workers who are repairing the electrical lines. To avoid back-feeding of electricity into utility systems, you must have a qualified, licensed electrician install a double-pole, double-throw transfer switch between the generator and utility power in compliance with all state and local electrical codes. (A minimum of 10-gauge wiring must be used.) Your generator might not be large enough to handle the load of all the lights, appliances, TV, etc., at one time. To prevent dangerous overloading, calculate wattage requirements correctly.