

Using Your Generator Safely

Power outages can cause a number of safety concerns, especially as residents seek heat from alternatives sources.

A generator can be an effective energy source during a power outage, but using it safely requires your attention. **Always read the directions that come with the device.**

NEVER use a portable generator indoors

- Never use a portable generator in a garage, carport, basement, crawlspace or other enclosed or partially-enclosed area, even with ventilation. Opening doors and windows or using fans will not prevent carbon monoxide (CO) buildup in the home.
 - **Remember: You cannot smell Carbon Monoxide.**
- Incorrect generator use can lead to CO poisoning from the toxic engine exhaust, electric shock, or electrocution and fire.
- Install home CO alarms that are battery-operated or have battery back-up. Test batteries frequently and replace when needed.
- If you start to feel sick, dizzy, or weak while using a generator, get to fresh air right away — do not delay!



Using your generator outdoors

- Place the generator away from windows, doors, and vents that could allow CO to come indoors.
- To avoid electrocution, keep the generator dry and do not use in rain 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.

Use and store generator fuel safely

- Turn the generator off and let it cool before refueling. Gasoline spilled on hot engine parts could ignite.
- Store generator fuel in an approved safety can outside of living areas. Local laws may restrict use or storage of fuel. Ask your local fire department for information.
- If you spill fuel, or do not seal its container properly, invisible vapors can travel along the ground and be ignited by an appliance's pilot light or arcs from electric switches in the appliance.
- Use *only* the type of fuel recommended in the generator instructions or on its label.

Don't overload your generator

- Determine the amount of power you will need. Light bulb wattage indicates the power needed. Appliance and equipment labels indicate their power requirements. If you can't determine the amount of power you will need, ask an electrician.
- Make sure your generator produces more power than will be drawn by the things you connect to the generator including the initial surge when it is turned on. If your generator does not produce enough power to operate everything at once, stagger the use of your equipment.
- If your equipment draws more power than the generator can produce, you may blow a fuse on the generator or worse yet, damage the connected equipment!

Connect your generator correctly

- 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.
- **Never** try to power your house by plugging the generator into a wall outlet, a practice known as "back feeding". *It can lead to the electrocution of utility workers or neighbors served by the same utility transformer.*
- The only safe way to connect a generator to house wiring is to have a qualified electrician install a power transfer switch.



City of Bothell™

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