

Generate Safety

Avoid the risks of carbon monoxide poisoning, electric shock

MOTHER NATURE IS unpredictable, but February has a history of bringing winter storms with ice and snow creating widespread—and sometimes long-lasting—power outages. A portable generator can power a few household essentials, like a water pump, heater, refrigerator, and a few lights, but it's important to know the potential dangers associated with using portable generators, such as their production of carbon monoxide (CO). CO is an odorless, colorless, and tasteless poisonous gas that is called the “silent killer” because it is virtually undetectable without the use of technology like CO alarms. Follow these tips to generate power—and safety—when using a generator.

By the Numbers:

- ▶ Storms account for many of the fatalities associated with generator use, with ice and snow storms accounting for 46 percent and hurricanes accounting for 29 percent.
- ▶ Sixty-seven percent of the fatalities occurred when a generator was placed in the living area or basement of the home.
- ▶ Twenty-six percent of fatalities occurred when a generator was used inside an attached garage or shed.
- ▶ Between 1992 and 2012 nearly 80 percent of the 931 carbon monoxide deaths were associated with generators.
- ▶ Fifty percent of generator-related deaths occurred between November and February; 30 percent occurred from March through April and September through October; 20 percent occurred during other months.

Tips for the Proper Installation and Use of Generators:

- ▶ NEVER operate a generator INSIDE your home or in other enclosed or partially enclosed spaces, including garages.
- ▶ A generator is a temporary power source and should never be used as a permanent solution.
- ▶ NEVER connect generators directly to household wiring without having a certified electrician first installing a transfer switch. This prevents back-feeding which could electrocute utility workers making repairs.
- ▶ Make sure your generator is properly grounded and used with a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI).
- ▶ Use only extension cords that have a three-pronged plug and are rated for the intended load.
- ▶ Your home generator should be installed by a qualified electrician and bear the mark of a nationally recognized testing laboratory, such as UL, Intertek or CSA.
- ▶ Install battery-operated carbon monoxide alarms or plug-in CO alarms with a battery backup.
- ▶ Do not overload the generator.
- ▶ The Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends generators be positioned at least 20 feet from doors, windows and vents to prevent carbon monoxide from entering the home. **KCL**

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