

# Portable Electric Generators


During warm weather months, demand for electricity in Wisconsin is greater than other times of the year. Utilities plan and build the electric system to have extra capacity available so customer outages are unlikely. Because of higher electrical use, this extra capacity is smaller in warm weather months, increasing the likelihood of outages.

You may be considering the purchase of a portable generator as a backup source of electricity in the event of a power outage. A properly sized portable generator can be used for a minimum amount of cooking or lighting, or to protect the food in your refrigerator and freezer.

- **A portable generator can pose serious safety hazards to you and others if not operated properly.**
- **Never plug a portable generator into a home outlet or connect it directly to the building's wiring system.**

## Proper installation and operation

- Before starting your generator, carefully read and follow all of the manufacturer's instructions.
- Use generators outside only. They produce deadly carbon monoxide fumes.
- With the generator set up outdoors, use properly sized 3-prong extension cords to connect appliances to the generator. Only connect appliances that have attached plugs (lamps, fans, microwaves, refrigerators, freezers). Start plugging in appliances with the largest load first, usually the refrigerator or freezer. Add loads one at a time to the generator. **Never plug a portable generator into a home outlet or connect it directly to the building's wiring system.** If a generator is connected to the building's wiring system, the electricity it generates not only enters the home's wiring, it also backs up into the local utility's electric system and will energize the line. This can cause serious injury to local utility crews who may be working on the line. If the lines are down, this could also injure anyone who may accidentally come into contact with the line. The generator will be damaged if it is connected to the house wiring when the local utility restores electricity after an outage.
- Don't enclose the generator or cover it with a box. It requires fresh air for ventilation.
- Operate away from dusty, sandy, or wet conditions.
- Use only properly sized (a minimum of 12- to 14-gauge) 3-prong extension cords. Keep extension cords out of the way and do not run cords under rugs or carpets where heat may build up, or where damage to a cord could go unnoticed. Check cords frequently to make sure they have not become hot. If they get hot, use a heavier gauge extension cord.
- Make sure all appliances plugged into the generator have overcurrent protection provided at the generator.
- To ensure the generator is in proper working condition, operate it monthly for ten minutes with some load (an appliance) attached.
- If equipped with a battery, keep the battery charged. The battery should be charged monthly with a trickle charger.
- Keep the tank filled with fresh fuel.



**USE EXTREME  
CAUTION WHEN  
OPERATING  
PORTABLE  
GENERATORS!**

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