

How to Safely Operate a Backup Generator

Backup generators can provide an emergency power supply, enabling you to keep important equipment running during a power outage. It's important to make sure generators are properly installed and operated to prevent health and safety risks for you and our crews.

Safely Installing a Generator

Before installing your backup generator, **follow all instructions in the manufacturer's written documentation, such as an operating manual, and all local building codes**, especially regarding placement of the unit and safe electrical connections. Not following these precautions may result in hazardous conditions, including the possibility of carbon monoxide poisoning or electrocution.

In addition, **never connect a generator directly to your home's electrical system without a proper isolation device**, a switch that disconnects your house from our power lines while your generator is operating, and vice versa. This applies to both portable generators and stationary units.

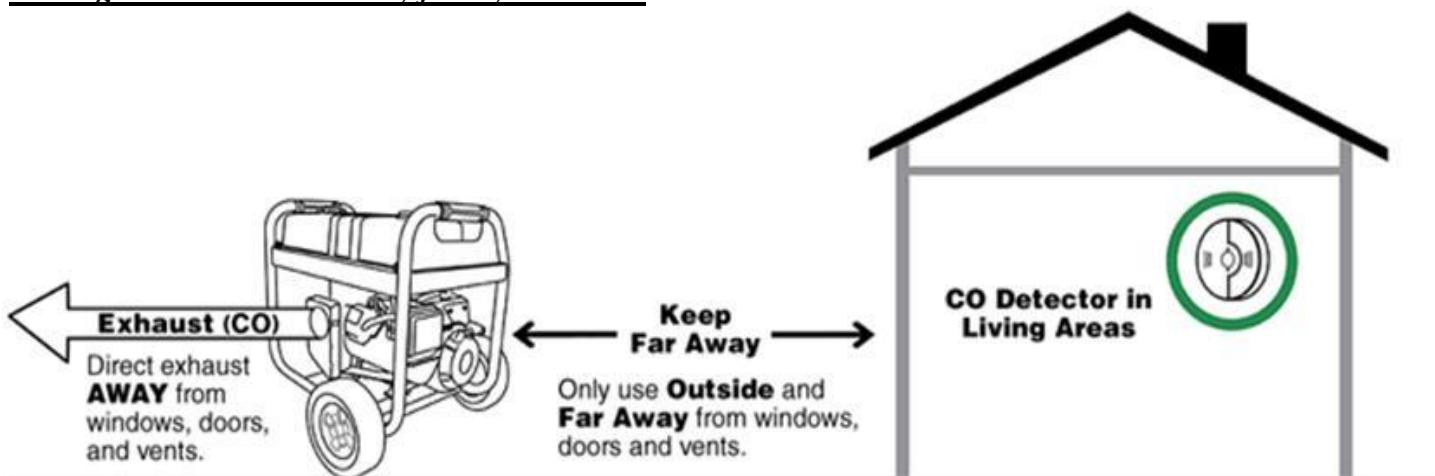
To have an isolation device installed, contact a qualified electrician. Unless our lines are positively isolated from your home, operating a generator connected into your home's wiring system could start a fire and/or electrocute a service crew member working to restore your power.

How to Properly Operate a Generator

Exhaust from backup generators, both portable and stationary, contains a high level of carbon monoxide (CO) gas, which can be dangerous or even fatal if inhaled. Follow these steps and view the diagrams below to ensure you are properly operating your generator and avoiding contact with deadly CO:

- Read and follow the operator's manual closely before operating your generator.
- Locate the generator outside of your home and far away from windows, doors and vents. **NEVER LOCATE A GENERATOR INSIDE YOUR HOME.**
- Direct exhaust away from windows, doors and vents.
- Do not operate a generator in partially enclosed spaces, even if using fans or opening doors and windows for ventilation.
- Install CO detectors/alarms throughout your home to ensure you are aware of the presence of CO gas. You cannot see, smell or taste CO.

Direct generator exhaust away from your home:



Do not operate a generator in any of the following locations:



Electrical and Fire Hazards of Operating a Generator

Backup generators can pose a risk of shock and electrocution, especially if they are operated in wet conditions. Because generators must be operated outdoors, it is important to pay special attention to weather and environmental conditions to prevent electrical accidents.

Follow these important electrical safety tips at all times when operating your backup generator:

- Operate the generator on a dry surface where water cannot reach it, or puddle or drain under it.
- Dry your hands, if wet, before touching the generator.
- If you must use a generator in wet conditions, protect the generator from moisture (as described in the owner's manual) to help avoid shock or electrocution hazard. This should be done without operating the generator indoors or near openings to any building that can be occupied in order to help avoid CO hazards.
- **NEVER** try to power home wiring by plugging the generator into a wall outlet, a practice known as "backfeeding." This is extremely dangerous and presents an electrocution risk to utility workers and neighbors served by the same circuit. It also bypasses some of the built-in household circuit protection devices.

When connecting appliances to the generator using an extension cord, follow these steps:

- Use heavy-duty extension cords that are specifically designed for outdoor use.
- Make sure the wattage rating for each cord exceeds the total wattage of all appliances connected to it.
- Use extension cords that are long enough to allow the generator to be placed outdoors and far away from windows, doors and vents to the home or to other structures that could be occupied.
- Check that the entire length of each cord is free of cuts or tears and that the plug has all three (or four) prongs.
- Protect the cord from getting pinched or crushed, and follow all cord safety labels including any limits on cord length.

In addition, use care when handling and storing fuel for your generator to avoid potential fire hazards:

- Never store fuel for your generator inside the home. Gasoline, propane, kerosene, and other flammable liquids should be stored outside of living areas in properly-labeled, non-glass safety containers. Do not store any of these substances near a fuel-burning appliance, such as a natural gas water heater in a garage.
- Before refueling a generator, turn it off and let it cool down for at least two minutes before removing the fuel cap. Gasoline spilled on hot engine parts could ignite. Never refuel a running portable generator.

Warning Signs of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Using a backup generator presents the risk of CO poisoning or even death. Because you cannot see, smell or taste CO, it is important to be aware of the symptoms of CO poisoning.

Symptoms of low-level CO poisoning can be similar to those of common illnesses, such as a cold, flu or food poisoning. These include:

- Headache
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Fainting
- Shortness of breath
- Weakness

If you experience any of these symptoms, get outside to fresh air immediately and call 911 for emergency medical attention. Very high levels of CO can cause victims to quickly lose consciousness before they can rescue themselves. **DO NOT** attempt to shut off the generator before moving to fresh air. Entering an enclosed space where a generator is or has been running may put you at greater risk of CO poisoning.