

Protect Yourself Portable Generator Safety

Portable generators are internal combustion engines used to generate electricity and are commonly used during disaster response. Portable generators can be dangerous if used incorrectly.

Major Causes of Injuries and Fatalities

- Shocks and electrocution from improper use of power or accidentally energizing other electrical systems.
- Carbon monoxide from a generator's exhaust.
- Fires from improperly refueling the generator or inappropriately storing fuel.

Safe Work Practices

- Inspect portable generators for damage or loose fuel lines that may have occurred during transportation and/or handling.
- Keep the generator dry.
- Maintain and operate portable generators according to the manufacturer's use and safety instructions.
- **Never attach a generator directly to the electrical system of a structure** (home, office or trailer) unless the generator has a properly installed transfer switch because this creates a risk of electrocution for utility workers.
- Always plug electrical appliances directly into the generator using the manufacturer's supplied cords. Use undamaged heavy-duty extension cords that are grounded (3-pronged).
- Use ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) as per the manufacturer's instructions.
- Before refueling, shut down the generator. Never store fuel indoors.

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless, toxic gas. Many workers have died from CO poisoning because their generator was not adequately ventilated.

- **Never use a generator indoors.**
- **Never place a generator outdoors near doors, windows, or vents.**
- **If you or others show symptoms of CO poisoning—dizziness, headaches, nausea, tiredness—get to fresh air immediately and seek medical attention.**



U.S. Department of Labor

For more information:

OSHA[®] Occupational Safety and Health Administration
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