

Generator Safety During Power Outages

The State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) encourages citizens considering purchasing a generator to make sure the generator is listed with the Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) or Factory Mutual (FM).

Before you purchase a generator read the labels on lighting, appliances, and equipment you plan to connect to the generator to determine the amount of power that will be needed to operate the equipment. For lighting, the power of the light bulb indicates the power needed. Appliances and equipment usually have labels indicating power requirements on them. Choose a generator that produces more power than will be drawn by a combination of lighting, appliances and equipment you plan to connect to the generator. Remember the initial power surge. If your equipment draws more power than the generator can produce, you may blow a fuse on the generator or damage your equipment.

Follow the installation directions supplied with your generator. Run portable generators outside of your home or garage. Adequate ventilation is necessary when running a generator. Proper refueling measures, outlined in the owner's manual, must be carefully followed. Make sure you have properly working carbon monoxide (CO) alarms inside your home.

Let your generator cool down before refueling. You must store extra fuel in an approved safety can. Do not store fuel in a garage, basement or anywhere inside your home. Vapors released from the fuel can cause illnesses, a potential fire or explosion hazard.

Connect the equipment you want to power directly to the outlets on the generator. Do not hook up a generator to your home's electrical service. Home use generators do not supply enough amperage to supply sufficient power to run the furnace, lighting, electronic equipment and appliances simultaneously. Unless your home power supply was installed with a disconnect to the main power feeding lines, power you put into your home from a generator could "backfeed" into the main line and cause problems for the utility company and you.

Improper connection methods endanger the occupants, the building, and pose a serious hazard for electric utility workers. There are a number of products available that will provide either an automatic or manual transfer between two power sources in a approved manner. If in doubt, contact a qualified electrician to install the generator.