



# Portable Generator Hazards

A Factsheet on Portable Generator Safety

**P**ortable generators are useful when temporary or remote electric power is needed, but they can be hazardous. The primary hazards to avoid when using them are carbon monoxide poisoning, electric shock or electrocution, and fire.

The United States Fire Administration (USFA) would like you to know that there are simple steps you can take to prevent the loss of life and property resulting from improper use of portable generators.

## **TO AVOID CARBON MONOXIDE HAZARDS:**

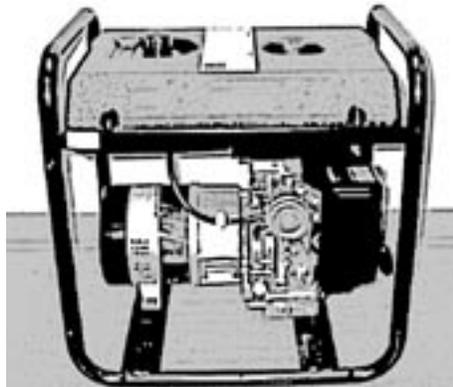
- Always use generators outdoors, away from doors, windows and vents.
- NEVER use generators in homes, garages, basements, crawl spaces, or other enclosed or partially enclosed areas, even with ventilation.
- Follow manufacturer's instructions.
- Install battery-operated or plug-in (with battery backup) carbon monoxide (CO) alarms in your home, following manufacturer's instructions.
- Test CO alarms often and replace batteries when needed.

## **TO AVOID ELECTRICAL HAZARDS:**

- Keep the generator dry. Operate on a dry surface under an open, canopy-like structure.
- Dry your hands before touching the generator.
- Plug appliances directly into generator or use a heavy-duty outdoor-rated extension cord. Make sure entire extension cord is free of cuts or

tears and the plug has all 3 prongs, especially a grounding pin.

- NEVER plug the generator into a wall outlet. This practice, known as back-feeding, can cause an electrocution risk to utility workers and others served by the same utility transformer.



- If necessary to connect generator to house wiring to power appliances, have a qualified electrician install appropriate equipment. Or, your utility company may be able to install an appropriate transfer switch.

## **TO AVOID FIRE HAZARDS:**

- Before refueling the generator, turn it off and let it cool. Fuel spilled on hot engine parts could ignite.

- Always store fuel outside of living areas in properly labeled, non-glass containers.
- Store fuel away from any fuel-burning appliance.

## **For More Information Contact: The United States Fire Administration**

National Fire Programs Division  
16825 South Seton Avenue  
Emmitsburg, MD 21727

**Or visit the USFA Web site:  
[www.usfa.fema.gov](http://www.usfa.fema.gov)**

**Visit our Kid's Page:  
[www.usfa.fema.gov/kids](http://www.usfa.fema.gov/kids)**

Information for this fact sheet was provided by the Consumer Product Safety Commission.



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