

Using Your Generator Safely

Power outages can cause a number of safety concerns, as residents seek heat from alternative sources.

A generator can be an effective energy source during a power outage, but using it safely requires your attention. Always read the directions that come with the device.

NEVER use a portable generator indoors

- NEVER use a portable generator in a garage, carport, basement, crawlspace or other enclosed or partially-enclosed area, even with ventilation. Opening doors and windows or using fans will not prevent carbon monoxide (CO) buildup in the home.
- Improper generator use can lead to CO poisoning from the toxic engine exhaust, electric shock or electrocution and fire.
- Install home CO alarms that are battery-operated or have battery back-up. Test batteries frequently and replace when needed.

Using your generator outdoors

- Place the generator away from windows, doors, and vents that could allow carbon monoxide to travel indoors.
- To avoid electrocution, keep the generator dry. Do not use in rain or wet conditions. Operate it on a dry surface under an open canopy-like structure. Make sure your hands are dry before touching the generator.

Use and store generator fuel safely

- Turn the generator off and let it cool before refueling. Gasoline spilled on hot engine parts could ignite.
- Store generator fuel in an approved safety can outside of living areas. Local laws may restrict use or storage of fuel.

Ask your local fire department for information.

- If you spill fuel, or do not seal its container properly, invisible vapors can travel along the ground and be ignited by an appliance's pilot light or arcs from electric switches in the appliance.
- Use only the type of fuel recommended in the generator instructions or on its label.

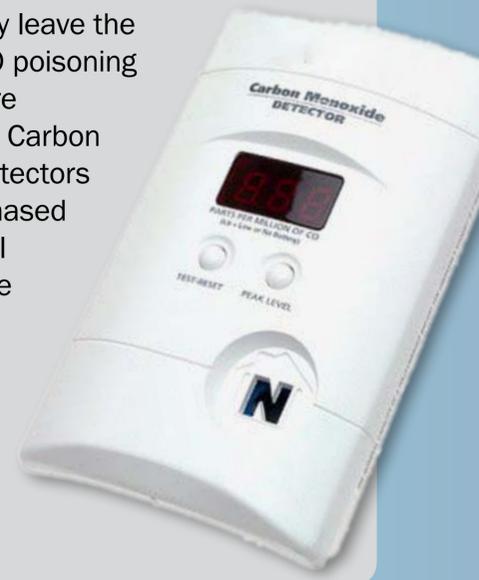
Don't overload your generator

- Determine the amount of power you will need. Light bulb wattage indicates the power needed. Appliance and equipment labels indicate their power requirements. If you can't determine the amount of power you will need, ask an electrician.
- Make sure your generator produces more power than will be drawn by the objects you connect to the generator including the initial surge when it is turned on.
- If your equipment draws more power than the generator can produce, you may blow a fuse on the generator or worse yet, damage the connected equipment!

Connect your generator correctly

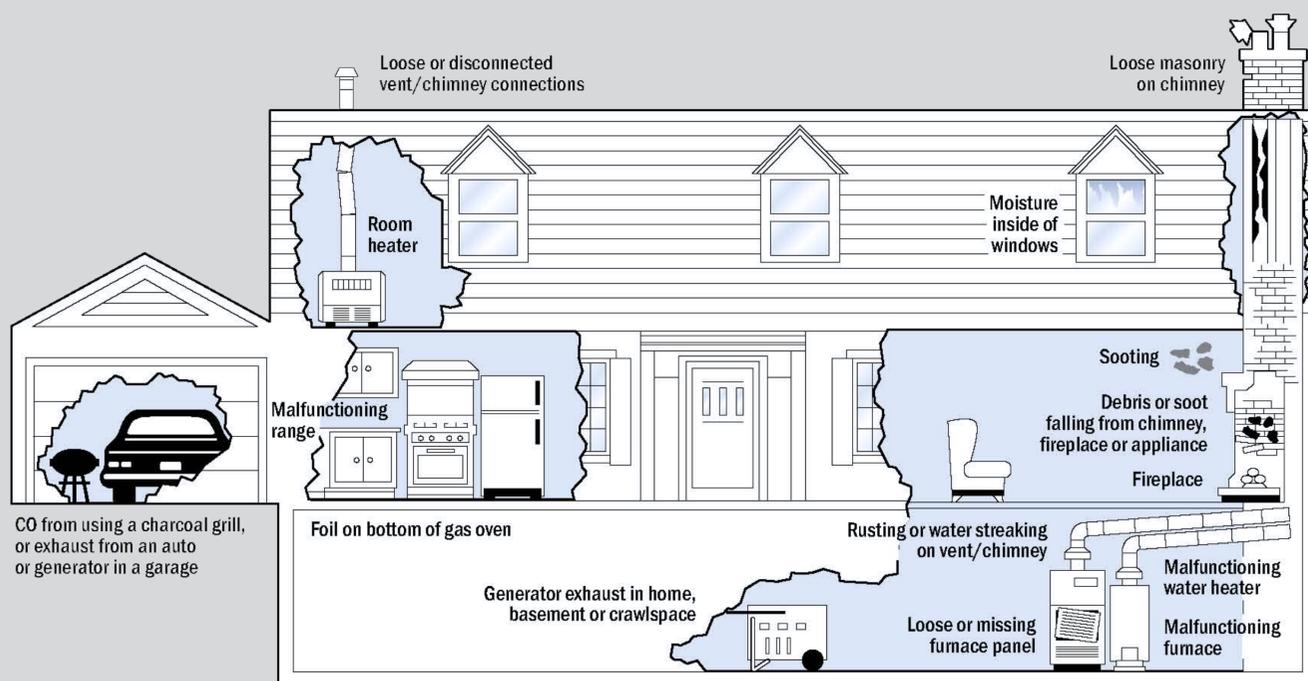
- Plug appliances directly into the generator, or use a heavy duty, outdoor-rated extension cord that is rated (in watts or amps) at least equal to the sum of the connected appliance loads.
- Never try to power your house by plugging the generator into a wall outlet, a practice known as "back feeding." It can lead to the electrocution of utility workers or neighbors served by the same utility transformer.
- The only safe way to connect a generator to house wiring is to have a qualified electrician install a power transfer switch.

A carbon monoxide detector is a device that detects the presence of carbon monoxide. If a high level of CO is detected, the device sounds an alarm to alert you and your family of a potential risk. Take immediate action and ventilate the area or safely leave the building if CO poisoning symptoms are experienced. Carbon monoxide detectors can be purchased at most retail and hardware stores.



Carbon Monoxide Can Be Deadly

You can't see or smell carbon monoxide, but at high levels it can kill a person in minutes. Carbon monoxide (CO) is produced whenever any fuel such as gas, oil, kerosene, wood, or charcoal is burned without enough air for complete combustion. If appliances that burn fuel are maintained and used properly, the amount of CO produced is usually not hazardous. However, if appliances are not working properly or are used incorrectly, dangerous levels of CO can result. Hundreds of people die accidentally every year from CO poisoning caused by malfunctioning or improperly used fuel-burning appliances.



Sources of and Clues to a Possible Carbon Monoxide (CO) Problem

Know the symptoms of CO poisoning:

Headaches, fatigue, dizziness, weakness, confusion and nausea

Many of these symptoms are similar to those of the flu, food poisoning, or other illnesses.

If you experience symptoms that you think could be from CO poisoning:

- Get fresh air immediately. Open doors and windows, turn off combustion appliances and leave the house.
- Go to an emergency room and tell the physician you suspect CO poisoning.
- If CO poisoning has occurred, it can often be diagnosed by a blood test done soon after exposure.