

Pick Your Power Source

Safety tips for operating portable generators

(Family Features) In a variety of situations, portable generators can supply temporary or remote electric power. From emergencies to recreational and construction activities, portable generators become a welcome addition to any instance when power is needed, yet not readily available.

For outdoor events such as tailgating, hunting and camping, an inverter generator is a quiet, reliable option. These temporary power sources can be used to power televisions, radios, small appliances, fans and space heaters. Before using one of these helpful devices at your next event, there are a few things to remember in order to keep friends and family safe.

“Portable generators are helpful in various situations, but the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning caused by their improper use are very real,” said Joe Harding, representative for Portable Generator Manufacturers’ Association (PGMA). “The educational efforts of PGMA, including the [Safety First campaign](#), are focused on educating the public on the proper selection and safe usage of portable generators.”

Essential safety tips

Generator exhaust contains high levels of carbon monoxide, a deadly gas that is tasteless, colorless and odorless. For any situation which requires temporary power to be available, consider the following preparation and safety tips:

- Do not run portable generators inside homes, garages, basements, crawlspaces, sheds or other partially-enclosed spaces, even if using fans or opening doors and windows. Carbon monoxide can quickly build up in these spaces and linger for hours, even after the generator has shut off.
- Only operate a portable generator outside, far away from windows, doors and vents to reduce the risk of carbon monoxide gas accumulating and potentially being drawn toward occupied spaces.
- Install battery-operated carbon monoxide alarms or plug-in alarms with battery backup according to the manufacturer’s instructions. Smoke alarms cannot detect carbon monoxide gas.
- Always place your portable generator downwind and point the engine exhaust away from occupied spaces.
- The symptoms of low-level carbon monoxide poisoning can be similar to those caused by other illness such as cold, flu or food poisoning. If you suspect you or a family member are experiencing any of these symptoms due to carbon monoxide poisoning, get outside to fresh air immediately and call 911 for emergency medical attention.
- Always refer to the generator owner’s manual for further information about safe operation and potential hazards.

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Source: Portable Generator Manufacturers’ Association

Regardless of the events requiring the use of portable generators, safety precautions should be considered in order to reduce risks of carbon monoxide poisoning. For more information, visit www.pgmaonline.com.