

# Portable Generator Safety

When the power goes out, portable generators can serve as a reliable source of electricity. However, if misused, portable generators can pose a serious health risk and have the potential to create a hazardous situation. The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission wants to remind Pennsylvanians to use generators safely.

## **Never use a generator indoors or in an attached garage.**

A portable generator is an internal combustion engine that exhausts carbon monoxide, a deadly gas that is odorless and colorless. You can unknowingly be overcome by the gas if the generator is indoors.

Be sure to place the generator outside where exhaust fumes will not enter into enclosed spaces. Only operate a generator outdoors in a well-ventilated, dry area, away from windows and other air intakes to the home. The generator should be protected from direct exposure to rain and snow.

## **Don't connect your generator directly to your home's wiring.**

Connecting a portable electric generator directly to your household wiring can be deadly. A generator that is directly connected to your home's wiring can 'back-feed' into the power lines connected to your home. Backfeeding occurs when electric power is being induced into the local power grid so that Power is flowing in the opposite direction from its usual flow. This can result in a very dangerous situation for local utility linemen who are trying to restore your power.

## **Don't overload the generator.**

All generators have a power rating. They should be used only when necessary and only to power a limited number of appliances or equipment. Extension cords must be properly sized to carry the electric load. Overloaded cords can overheat and cause fires or damage to equipment.

## **Make sure your generator is properly grounded to avoid electrical shocks.**

Check the generator owner's manual for correct grounding information.

## **Keep cords out of the way so they don't present a tripping hazard**

Never run cords under rugs or carpets where heat might build up or damage to a cord may go unnoticed.

*\* Always remember to follow the manufacturer's operating and maintenance instructions that accompany your generator before operating and to consult a licensed electrician to choose a generator that is the proper size for your home or business. Also have the electrician verify it meets the national and local electrical code requirements.*

## **For further information, contact the Public Utility Commission:**

### **Write**

PA Public Utility Commission  
Bureau of Consumer Services  
P.O. Box 3265  
Harrisburg, PA 17105-3265

### **Call**

1-800-692-7380  
For people with speech or hearing loss, dial 7-1-1 (Telecommunications Relay Service)

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[www.PAPowerSwitch.com](http://www.PAPowerSwitch.com)  
[www.puc.pa.gov](http://www.puc.pa.gov)

