

Portable generators

Tips for safe portable generator use

- Read the operator's manual before using the generator.
- Only allow qualified persons to set up, refuel and operate the generator.
- Never use a generator indoors as accumulation of carbon monoxide may build up over acceptable levels.
- Do not use a generator near doors, vents or windows as carbon monoxide could enter occupied building spaces.
- Portable generators shall be positioned so that the exhaust is directed at least 5 feet (1.5m) in any direction away from building openings or air intakes, and away from the building.*
- Do not operate a generator near combustible materials. Clearance distances will differ by brand; check the manufacturer's information for appropriate operating distances.
- Allow clearance on all sides of the generator to provide adequate ventilation.
- Never attach a generator directly to a structure's electrical system unless installation is completed by a qualified electrician using an approved transfer switch.
- Use ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) in and around wet or damp environments and keep the generator dry.
- Make sure the generator is properly grounded.
- Routinely inspect extension cords to make sure they have grounded plugs.
- Never use frayed or damaged extension cords; consult the generator manufacturer's specifications for maximum cord length.
- Never refuel a hot generator. Allow it to cool before refueling.
- Store gasoline in approved containers and properly mark to identify the contents.
- Store gasoline away from the generator and heat-producing devices.
- If work must be performed near a generator, wear appropriate hearing protection.
- Complete routine maintenance following the manufacturer's guidelines to ensure the generator is operating as designed.

Portable generators can be valuable tools when remote electrical power is needed. Follow manufacturer's instructions and guidelines for use, repair and maintenance. If additional information or assistance is needed, contact your UFG risk control consultant or independent agent.

**NFPA 1, Chapter 11.7.2 (2018)*

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Portable generators will deliver electrical power for remote work environments and in emergency situations when electricity is not available. Generators are often used after a disaster for cleanup and recovery efforts, minimizing disruptions to strengthen business resiliency. They are also commonly used in construction as a source of electricity when power is not readily available. Portable generators can be very hazardous. Proper safety precautions should be taken when they are used.

Generator hazards

- Carbon monoxide from exhaust fumes.
- Shock and electrocution from improper use.
- Fires from refueling and hot surfaces.
- Noise and vibration.
- Employee injury while lifting and moving.