

## Choosing a Portable Generator

Portable generators can be used as a temporary source of electricity if your power is out. Choose a generator that is rated higher than the amount of power you will need.

- For lighting, the light bulb's wattage is the amount of power needed.
- Appliances and equipment have labels that note the power requirements.

A qualified electrician can also help you determine the amount of power needed.

If your generator does not produce more power than the amount needed, you can run equipment at different times.

## Using a Portable Generator

When using a portable generator, follow these tips:

- **Always** follow the manufacturer's guidelines and instructions.
- Operate a generator **outdoors** on a dry surface that is protected from moisture and away from flammable objects, windows, doors, or vents.
- Use a heavy-duty UL-listed extension cord to connect appliances to the generator. The extension cord should be free of tears or cuts and have a plug with three prongs. Appliances can also be plugged into the generator directly.
- Overloading the generator can blow a fuse on the generator or cause damage to the equipment connected to it.
- Before shutting down a generator,

turn off the appliances that are connected to it.

- Turn off a generator and let it cool down before adding fuel.
- Store fuel in approved containers in a safe place away from living areas and out of children's reach.
- When not in use, generators should be stored in a dry location.

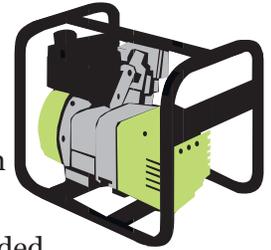
## Portable Generator Safety

The main hazards when using a generator are carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning, electric shock or electrocution, and fire.

Here are some safety tips to keep in mind:

- Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless gas that can cause sudden illness and death. CO is found in a generator's fumes.
- Signs of CO poisoning include: headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, chest pain, and confusion. A person who is sleeping or has lost consciousness may die without experiencing these symptoms.
- **Never** use a portable generator indoors — including a garage, carport, basement, crawlspace, or other enclosed or partially-enclosed area. CO can build up quickly. Opening windows and doors and using fans will **not** prevent CO poisoning.
- Do not operate a generator near windows, doors, or vents. This could allow CO fumes to come indoors.

- Install battery-operated CO alarms or plug-in CO alarms with battery back-up in your home. Test the battery often and replace if needed.



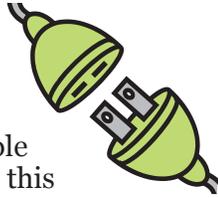
- Do not allow the generator to get wet or touch it with wet hands — you may be shocked or electrocuted.
- Avoid contact with a running generator because it may become very hot and cause a burn. Keep children and pets away.
- Make sure a generator has cooled before adding fuel — if gasoline is spilled on hot parts, it may start a fire.
- Never plug a generator into a wall outlet, a practice known as “backfeeding” or “feedback.” This may put utility workers and those served by the same utility transformer at risk of electrocution.

## Additional Information

In the event of a power outage, you should not use a gas oven, range, or outdoor barbecue to heat your home. This is not their intended use and could result in carbon monoxide poisoning.

## Resources

Contact an electrician for more information on using portable generators safely. Your utility company may be able to provide information on this topic as well.



Duke Energy 1-800-777-9898  
[www.duke-energy.com](http://www.duke-energy.com)

Lockhart Power 1-800-368-1289  
[www.lockhartpower.com](http://www.lockhartpower.com)

Piedmont Natural Gas 1-800-752-7504  
[www.piedmontng.com](http://www.piedmontng.com)

Progress Energy 1-800-452-2777  
[www.progress-energy.com](http://www.progress-energy.com)

SCE&G 1-800-251-7234  
[www.scana.com/SCEG](http://www.scana.com/SCEG)

### References:

American Red Cross, [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org).  
*Fact Sheet: Using a Generator When Disaster Strikes*

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov). *Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Fact Sheet*

Electrical Safety Foundation International, [www.esfi.org](http://www.esfi.org). *Portable Generator Safety*

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## Contact the ORS

The Consumer Services Division of the Office of Regulatory Staff can assist with utility bills by arranging payment plans with your electric or gas utility or by directing you to social service agencies that may have available funds to assist with energy costs.

**Phone** 803-737-5230 (Columbia, S.C.)  
1-800-922-1531 (toll-free in S.C.)

803-737-5175 TTY (Columbia, S.C.)  
1-800-334-2217 TTY (toll-free in S.C.)

**Fax** 803-737-4750

**Web** [www.regulatorystaff.sc.gov](http://www.regulatorystaff.sc.gov)

**Hours** 8:30 a.m.—5:00 p.m.  
Monday through Friday  
(closed state holidays)

## About the ORS

The S.C. Office of Regulatory Staff (ORS) was created in 2004 by the S.C. General Assembly.

The ORS represents the public interest of South Carolina in utility regulation with regard to rates, charges, service standards, facilities, and practices of the major utility industries — electric, natural gas, telecommunications, water/wastewater, and transportation — before the Public Service Commission of South Carolina (PSC), the court system, the S.C. General Assembly, and federal regulatory bodies. The ORS has responsibility for oversight of railroad safety and natural gas pipeline safety in the state.

In fulfilling this mission, the ORS strives to balance the concerns of the using and consuming public, the financial integrity of public utilities, and the economic development of South Carolina.

# Portable Generator Safety



# Information for Consumers