

Generator safety tips to see you through the storm

When a hurricane, blizzard or any extreme storm causes a power outage, don't short-circuit safety. Keep these generator usage guidelines close at hand.

Portable generators are becoming as essential as back-up smartphone chargers in this time of more frequent severe weather events and associated blackouts. When properly selected, used and maintained, generators can help ease the impact of any power outage on a business or residence. But generators can be extremely dangerous.



These seven tips can help you avoid operational errors that can have dire consequences.

- 1. Never use a portable generator indoors,** including in garages or other partially enclosed areas, even with ventilation. A generator's exhaust can quickly emit potentially deadly levels of carbon monoxide. Consider operating the generator in conjunction with a battery-operated carbon monoxide alarm. Don't leave a running generator unattended.
- 2. Review the manufacturer's instructions,** even if you've read them before. Each portable generator has a rated wattage, which limits what it can safely power. Add up the wattage of equipment/appliances you want to connect and do not exceed the generator's total rated wattage. If you have questions about its capacity, consult a Zurich Risk Engineer or a licensed electrician.
- 3. Do not wire a portable generator directly to a breaker or fuse box.** The power generated could flow out to utility lines and injure or kill crew working to restore power after a storm. Plug items directly into the generator, or use a heavy-duty, outdoor-specific extension cord that is rated (in watts or amps) at least equal to the load of the equipment you will connect.
- 4. Do not use the generator in wet conditions.** Operate the generator on a dry surface under an open, canopy-like structure. Dry your hands if damp before touching the generator.
- 5. Before refueling a portable generator, turn it off and let it cool.** Gasoline spilled on hot engine parts could ignite.
- 6. Store gas for the generator safely outside of an office or home,** in properly labeled, non-glass safety containers. You will be competing with the throngs to buy fuel as a storm approaches if you wait until the eleventh hour.
- 7. Do not store generator fuel near a fuel-burning appliance,** such as a water heater in a garage. If the fuel is spilled or the container is not sealed properly, vapors from the fuel can travel and be ignited by the appliance's pilot light or by arcs from electric switches in the appliance.

**Find additional storm-related resources,
go to www.zurichna.com/severeweather**

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