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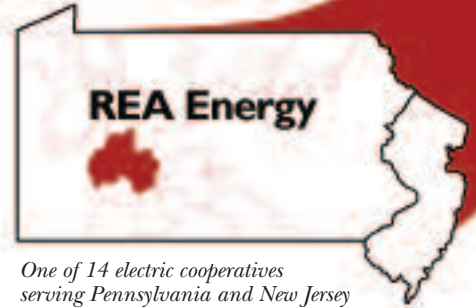
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## Safe Generator Operation is Critical

by Terry Neely

Marketing Specialist

Portable electric generators have become a popular item for many homeowners looking to avoid extensive power outages caused by severe storms, regional blackouts, or even terrorist attacks. Having a portable gasoline-powered generator can be a real blessing in the aftermath of a hurricane or other serious calamity.

As with any power tool, portable generators can be dangerous if not handled carefully. This potential danger was clearly illustrated following hurricanes in Florida last year when the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), after sampling only 10 hospitals, reported six deaths and 167 people hospitalized from carbon monoxide poisoning due to running generators in enclosed spaces such as homes or garages.

Always, always run your generator outdoors in a well-ventilated area and away from open doors or windows where exhaust fumes could enter your home.

Before operating your generator, read

and observe the manufacturer's instructions. You will also want to maintain your generator according to the manufacturer's recommended schedule for peak performance and safety.

**Some key safety rules to follow include:**

- Make sure the generator is on level ground to operate.
- Do not operate the generator near combustible materials.
- Check the oil level, and fill if necessary before operating.
- Ground the generator to your home's electrical system grounding rod before operating.
- Use fresh gas in your generator. If you are going to leave gas in it for an extended time, add a gas stabilizer.
- Don't overload your generator. Make certain it has the output for the job you want to do.
- When using extension cords, it is best to use heavy-duty, outdoor-rated grounded cords with sufficient wire gauge for your application.
- Run your generator for at least 30 min-

utes monthly to keep the engine lubricated and ready for operation. Use a work light or other small load to exercise the generator and maintain residual magnetism.

• If you want to connect your generator to your home's electrical system, have a qualified electrician install a transfer switch. **NEVER, EVER PLUG YOUR GENERATOR DIRECTLY INTO YOUR HOME'S WIRING.** This could allow the current from your generator to go out over electric lines and possibly electrocute the people working to restore your power. At a minimum, your generator will be overloaded and possibly damaged as it tries to power your entire neighborhood.

REA Energy Services sells and installs a complete range of emergency and standby generators for all applications. You can save up to \$100 when you buy the transfer switch installation along with your new generator.

Knowledgeable employees are available to help you select the right generator for your needs. Call 724/349-4800 or 1-800-211-5667 for information.

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