

Standby Generators

A generator is a portable unit (though it can be heavy - up to 200 pounds) driven by an internal combustion engine. The generator is connected to the home's electric service panel by some type of transfer switch. The size (maximum output) of your generator, and therefore the costs you might incur in purchasing, installing and operating it, will be determined largely by the type of electric loads (for example, heating plant, water pump and refrigerator) you plan to use it for. Sizing a generator properly is critical for reliability.

Important considerations when choosing a generator:

- **Fuel:** Typically, a generator runs on gasoline, diesel fuel or propane. Availability and cost of each of these fuel types should be considered when shopping for a generator.
- **Maintenance:** Maintaining a generator can become a year-round obligation, even though the generator most likely will be used only for short periods. For gasoline and diesel generators, the fuel must be kept fresh, so fuel stabilizers are recommended for extended periods of inactivity, and oil must occasionally be changed.
- **Ventilation:** Another critical factor is ventilation. Since generators burn fuel, they produce exhaust, which must in all circumstances be vented outside of the building.
- **Noise:** The amount of noise produced by a generator varies with the size and type of the unit. Siting the unit to minimize the effects of noise on the owners and to provide adequate ventilation for exhaust are important decisions affecting satisfactory use.
- **Starting Mechanism:** There are three options for the engine's starting mechanism: (1) manual start with a pull cable (like

starting a lawnmower); (2) electric start (which is done by pressing a start button connected to a battery); (3) an automatic, or “smart” transfer switch that can tell when power has been lost and can turn the generator on.

Learn more: [Generators & Standby Batteries: Two Systems Of “Backup” Electrical Power](#)

PROTECT YOUR CO-OP’S LINE WORKERS WITH TRANSFER SWITCH:

Generators can pose a hazard for line crews unless there is a properly installed “double-pole, double-throw” transfer switch that ensures that power produced by a generator does not back feed onto the utility’s electric system. A worker repairing a damaged power line could be electrocuted by a charge carried over wires he thought were dead..

Please let us know if you do own and use a generator so that we can make a note of it on your account record. The line worker’s greatest fear is the generator s/he doesn’t know about, which could energize the line unexpectedly and put his/her life in peril.

Members installing electric generators are required to notify the Co-op about their equipment, per policy bulletin #37. The Co-op will inspect generation equipment to assure compliance with safety codes.