

# Use of generators in domestic situations >

**This information bulletin provides information about risks associated with the use of generators during periods of power outage.**

Generators driven by petrol or other combustible fuels can be very useful to provide power to essential items when mains power is not available. However, you need to follow some basic safety rules to make sure that using a generator is safe.

## Safety Rules for Using Generators

- > Keep the generator outside. **Never use it indoors.** Generators can produce high levels of carbon monoxide (CO). Like electricity, CO cannot be seen or smelt.  
**If you start to feel sick, dizzy or weak while using the generator, move away immediately and get some fresh air. CO poisoning can kill!**
- > Install a battery-operated carbon monoxide alarm – available from safety equipment suppliers.
- > Keep the generator dry. Do not use in rain or wet conditions. To protect from moisture, operate it on a dry surface under an open, canopy-like structure.
- > Dry your hands if they are wet **before** touching the generator.
- > Plug appliances directly into the generator. Or, use a heavy duty, outdoor-rated extension cord that is rated (in watts or amps) at least equal to the sum of the connected appliance loads. Check that the entire cord is free of cuts or tears and that the plug has all three prongs, especially an earthing pin. An earth stake is not required for portable generators.
- > **Never** try to power the house wiring by plugging the generator into a wall outlet, a practice known as "backfeeding". This is an extremely dangerous practice that presents an **electrocution risk** to utility workers and neighbours served by the same utility transformer. It also bypasses some of the built-in household circuit protection devices (safety switches).
- > If you must connect the generator to the house wiring to power appliances, **get a licensed electrical contractor to do it** in accordance with AS/NZS 3000 *Electrical installations (known as the Australian/New Zealand Wiring Rules)* and Power and Water Corporation requirements.
- > Avoid creating a fire hazard. Store fuel for your generator in **properly labelled non-glass safety containers**, out of the home and away from fuel-burning appliances (such as natural gas water heater in the garage). **Don't store fuel in the vicinity of pool chlorine** – if mixed they can react violently. Don't store more fuel than you reasonably need as this can be a hazard, particularly if there is a fire.
- > **Before refuelling the generator, turn it off and let it cool down.** Fuel spilt on hot engine parts could ignite. Use a funnel and refuel in a well ventilated area.

For further information call NT WorkSafe on 1800 019 115 or visit [www.worksafe.nt.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.nt.gov.au)

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