

How to choose and use a portable generator safely

A portable generator can keep essentials running in a long power cut, but its exhaust contains carbon monoxide, which can kill. Choose a model with an automatic CO shut-off and only ever run it outdoors, well away from the house.

What to look for

- ☐ Choose a portable generator with a CO shut-off safety feature, which switches it off automatically when carbon monoxide builds up around it.
- ☐ Look for models certified to the PGMA G300-2018 and UL 2201 safety standards; CPSC estimates these cut CO poisoning deaths by 87% and 100% respectively.
- ☐ Buy battery-operated or battery back-up CO alarms for your home at the same time.

Avoid

- Never run a generator inside a home, garage, basement, crawlspace, shed or any other enclosed space.
- Do not rely on open doors or windows: they do not let in enough air to stop deadly CO building up.
- Do not run it on a porch or in a carport.

After you buy

- Run it outside only, more than 20 feet (about 6 metres) from any windows, doors and vents.
- Close nearby windows and seal vents near the generator or in the path of its exhaust.
- Keep CO alarms near every sleeping area, test them monthly and replace them as the maker says or every 5 years.