

Electrical safety while using generators.

During or after a cyclone, storm or flood, power may be interrupted. Portable generators can be useful to maintain critical appliances until power is restored, however generators may be hazardous if used incorrectly.

What should I do before connecting a generator to my premises?

- Contact a licensed electrical contractor for advice on what you will need to do to ensure a portable generator can be connected safely to the wiring in your home or business.
- Your home or office **must** have a change-over switch installed by a licensed electrical contractor.
- Only use a generator that complies with Australian standards (AS2970). The Australian Standard mark will appear on your generator or its packaging.
- Ensure you read the manufacturer's instructions carefully before using a generator.

What do I need to know to operate my generator safely?

A portable generator can be a convenient method to maintain power to critical appliances if your electricity supply has been interrupted, however it can pose serious health and safety risks if installed or operated incorrectly.

Fire hazards

- Turn off your generator when refuelling, or when there are no operating appliances connected. Hot engine parts or exhaust could ignite the petrol.
- Never leave a running generator unattended in case of fire. Turn the generator off at night and when you're away from home.
- Avoid naked flames or ignition sources.

Carbon monoxide hazards

- Petrol or diesel powered generators produce deadly carbon monoxide fumes. Don't trust your senses to help you identify if carbon monoxide is entering your home or business. Always run your portable generator outdoors, and keep it well away from open windows - including those of your neighbours - so that exhaust fumes don't enter homes or businesses.

Electrical hazards

- Never attempt to modify or plug your generator directly into power points or to any part of Ergon Energy's network, or operate your generator without a change-over switch. Failure to do so could result in electricity being generated and back fed through your service line, into powerlines. This has the potential to electrocute people in neighbouring properties, people in close proximity to fallen powerlines, or crews working to restore your normal electricity supply. It can also cause significant damage to your generator.
- Never attempt to install, operate or connect to a generator that is submerged in water, or while you are standing in water. This could result in electrocution or damage to appliances.
- Don't overload your generator. Every generator has a rated 'wattage' which limits the number of appliances it can safely power. Consider the total rating of all appliances that you wish to operate at the same time to determine if your generator can safely provide power to them. Limit the use of your generator for periods of short duration, or for one appliance.
- Rotate the use of larger items. This allows the use of a smaller generator which costs less to buy and is easier to move.

Appliance	Rating (watts)
Fridge	240
Freezer	240
Computer monitor	100
Pressure pump	1000
Heater	2400
Kettle	2400
Lights (compact fluorescent)	15
Lights (incandescent)	75
Microwave oven	1000
Radio	70
Toaster	1000
TV (standard)	70

- Remember to take into account that appliances with motors will use three to four times the running rating during the start up process.
- The table shows the typical rating of some common household appliances. The actual rating of your appliances may vary depending on the model type.

What should I do when operating my generator with extension leads and power boards?

- Ensure all leads and power boards are in good working order eg. no damage to plug tops or exposed wiring.
- Always use a heavy-duty extension cord rated for outdoor use.
- Consider where leads and power boards are to be placed. Make sure they cannot be stepped on or tripped on, and keep away from wet areas.
- Ensure all appliances are off before connecting them to your generator.
- Once your appliances are connected to your generator, turn them on one by one to avoid overloading the generator.
- Appliances can be plugged directly into the generator power outlet, but always read the manufacturer's instructions carefully.

What else do I need to know?

- Make sure your generator is in good condition before storm season arrives.
- Inspect the fuel line for leaks or cracks and replace if necessary, refill the tank with fresh fuel, and run the generator to ensure it is working correctly. Plug in some appliances, such as a hair dryer, to make sure the generator is working properly.
- When storm season is over, empty the fuel from your generator, and properly store it so that it will be ready to go next season when you need it.

For more information

Ergon Energy's Community Safety team is available to conduct Electrical Awareness sessions and discuss any questions relating to electrical safety.

Customer service
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Faults only
13 22 96
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