

SAFETY

CRACKING THE CODE ON GENERATOR OPTIONS



Generators can provide reliable backup power in the event of an outage. When choosing a generator, it's important to select the right type and size to fit your particular needs. Think about what you want your generator to power. Do you just want to keep your phone charged and your refrigerator cold? Do you want to make sure you have heat and air conditioning through an extended outage? Does someone in your household depend on medical equipment that is powered by electricity?

The answers to these and similar questions will help determine what type of generator you should purchase. For powering some lights, a phone charger, and a few appliances, a small portable unit would work. For long-term protection, including powering a heating or cooling system, a standby generator would be the better choice.

Let's take a brief look at the four main types of generators and what they can power:

Whole-house standby generators

- Up to 20,000 watts
- Can cost \$7,000, plus installation
- Must be permanently installed by a professional electrician
- Turn on automatically during an outage
- Must be located outdoors
- Can power nearly all home appliances and electronics simultaneously

Portable generators

- Up to 7,500 watts
- Cost anywhere from \$400 to a few thousand dollars
- Will need to be manually started when power goes out
- If connected directly to your home's electrical panel, MUST include a transfer switch to break the circuit and prevent backfeed onto power lines
- Must be located outdoors
- Can power fridge, gas furnace, 10,000 BTU air conditioner, dishwasher, multiple lights, TV, laptop, and more

Inverter generators

- Sizes available from a few hundred watts up to 7,500 watts
- Costs similar to a portable generator
- Only produce the amount of power that is being used by your home, making them more fuel-efficient
- Must be located outdoors
- Electricity capabilities vary, depending upon wattage of the unit

Power stations

- Come in a wide range of sizes, but average-sized models range from a few hundred watts up to about 1,000 watts
- Anywhere from a few hundred to several thousand dollars
- Essentially an oversized battery that charges while plugged in to a 110-volt outlet and can be use as a power source later
- Can be operated indoors
- Many include both AC and DC outlets, or even USB charging ports
- Small units may only charge a phone or laptop, while the largest can power several major appliances

The proper selection, use, and maintenance of a generator can provide great convenience during a power outage. However, it's important to also remember that if they are used incorrectly, generators can be extremely hazardous. Always thoroughly read the owner's manual for important safety information before you operate a generator.

For additional generator information and safety tips, visit Firelands' website at www.firelandsec.com/generator-safety. If you need help deciding what type of generator is right for your home, contact the energy advisors at Firelands Electric Cooperative at 1-800-533-8658. They are always happy to help!