



MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™  
MS AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTRY  
EXPERIMENT STATION

# MAFES DAWG TRACKS

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Portable generators are useful to power tools and equipment when on a remote job site, power that much needed air conditioner when camping off grid in the summer, or useful for emergency backup power after storms roll through leaving downed power lines and lingering blackout conditions. But did you know that generators can also be deadly?

Portable generators burn gasoline, propane or another fuel and that combustion, in return, creates carbon monoxide exhaust. According to the National Institute of Standards and Technology, one generator can produce the same amount of carbon monoxide as 100 cars. In a 14 year study period from Consumer Product Safety Commission, portable generators were involved in 85% of carbon monoxide deaths.

To prevent carbon monoxide poisoning from a generator, only use it outdoors in an open, well ventilated area. Do not even use it in attached structures such as a garage or barn. Make sure the generator is placed at least 15 feet from the structure and that the exhaust is pointed away from the building and any windows, doors or vents that could draw the exhaust indoors.

Remember back to school and that law about how energy cannot be created or destroyed, but only be changed from one form to another. Well, a generator's energy product is electricity and heat from that motor. Being cautious of the dangers associated with these products will also help protect your home, your property and your life during generator use.

## Dangers from Generator's Heat:

- Keep children and pets away from generators in operation. They will become hot and should avoid being touched.
- Hot engine parts and accidentally spilled gasolines on them can ignite. Turn off the generator and let it cool down before refueling. Never refuel a generator while it is running.
- Store the fuel that you use to run the generator away from the generator in a safe place. Make sure there are no spills unattended.
- Clean up any fuel spills so the fumes will not activate an unstable atmosphere when combined with the power produced by the generator.

## Avoid Electrical Hazards:

- Keep a generator dry during use. Do not use in rain, snow or wet conditions. Set the generator on a dry surface under an open canopy-like structure, such as under a tarp held up on poles. Water seeping into unprotected outlets can cause breakers to trip or short circuits.
- Avoid operating a generator near standing water. If the standing water is exposed to electricity, anyone nearby is at risk of potential shock.
- It is important to plug your appliance directly into the generator. If there is an extension cord it will need to be a heavy-duty type that is specially used for outdoors. It should be one that you know can handle the load.
- Never plug the generator into a wall outlet. It's both an illegal and very dangerous practice that can cause electrical back feed resulting in fire to your property and electrocution to power line workers who are actively working.

For more info contact:  
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## **Sources:**

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