



GM'S REPORT

BE SAFETY SMART WHEN USING A GENERATOR

The safety of our members and our employees is top priority at Firelands Electric Cooperative. Our team provides electrical safety education to many in our community, including adults, students, and first responders. We cover everything from power line and home safety to how to stay safe in the event of a car-versus-pole accident. While our safety education efforts take place year-round, the co-op gives it special emphasis every May as part of National Electrical Safety Month.

This year, with the spring and summer storm season upon us and the ownership of portable generators on the rise, Firelands Electric wants to make sure that co-op members are being safety smart about their use.

When storms hit and power lines go down, our crews take precautions before they get to work on making repairs. They verify that the line is de-energized, isolate it from the distribution system, and properly ground lines and equipment.

Even after all these measures, an improperly connected portable generator can still be hazardous. Of course, no one would ever purposely put co-op crews or the community at risk, but a generator connected directly to a home's wiring or plugged into an everyday household outlet can cause backfeeding along power lines. The standard residential 120 volts converts to 7,200 volts as it flows in reverse through the home's transformer and back onto distribution lines. This level of power is deadly, capable of electrocuting anyone who comes into contact with the line — including lineworkers, first responders, and your neighbors — even if it appears harmless.

Firelands Electric employees are not the only ones in danger when a portable generator is operated incorrectly. Generator owners themselves could be at risk of electrocution, fire, property damage, or carbon monoxide poisoning if they do not follow the necessary safety rules.

To protect yourself, your family, and your community, follow these guidelines when using a generator:

- Never connect a generator to your home's wiring or an outlet. This can cause backfeeding along power lines and electrocute anyone who comes into contact

with them, including lineworkers making repairs. If you want to have your emergency generator connected directly to your home's electrical system, have a licensed electrician install only approved equipment necessary to do it safely.

- Plug appliances directly into generators unless you have an approved transfer switch installed. Connecting a generator to your home's circuits or wiring must be done by a qualified, licensed electrician who will install an approved transfer switch to prevent backfeeding.
- Use heavy-duty, outdoor-rated extension cords. Make sure extension cords have plugs with three prongs and avoid overloading cords, which can cause fires or equipment damage.
- Ensure your generator is properly grounded and never refuel while it is operating. For gasoline-powered units, we recommend using non-ethanol gasoline, if it is supported by the generator's manufacturer. Adding a fuel stabilizer can also help prolong the storage life of gasoline.
- Turn off all equipment powered by a generator before shutting it down.
- Keep the generator dry and in a well-ventilated area. Never operate a generator in a home, garage, or other enclosed space. Position it on a dry surface under an open structure and away from windows.
- Most importantly, read and follow all the manufacturer's instructions.

A generator can be a valuable tool during a power outage, but make sure you use this tool wisely to protect the well-being and safety of your family and safeguard those who may come to your aid. By working together, we can keep the lights on and keep our families and our community safe.



Dan McNaull
GENERAL MANAGER