

# BACK UP POWER ALTERNATIVES

Losing your power can be exciting, almost camp like, and cozy. Cooking on the camp stove, using flashlights, candles, cozying up with someone special, and just enjoying the quiet, or in some cases enjoying the wind howling, can be fun, as long as it doesn't interfere with your life to the point of making your life miserable.

When the power goes out at an inconvenient time or an extended period of time, it becomes a nuisance, or in some cases, it can cause a significant amount of damage. This is the time you will need some type of back up power.

In this series of articles, we will discuss safety of portable and automatic generators, the differences in the two, sizing of the generator, questions to ask before buying, finding a reputable dealer and installer, advantages and disadvantages of buying from a box store, on line, and from a dealer, as well as accessories.

What are a few fundamental differences between a portable generator and an automatic generator?

**SAFETY:** Portable generators all come with a warning "*DO NOT OPERATE WHEN NOT HOME OR WHEN YOU ARE ASLEEP*" This is because all generators can surge and send unsafe voltages and frequencies into your home, and cause the electricity to 'jump' receptacles, controls etc and cause fires. We have received numerous calls where kitchen receptacles have burst into flames, tv's and dishwashers burst into flames, even when the appliances are off. Furnace and other electronic components are destroyed. Portable generators do not have protection to shut itself down in case of a surge

Automatic generators have over-voltage, low voltage, high and low frequency, and over speed protection in the event any of these conditions would exist. As a result, they can operate around the clock even if you are not home, or if you are asleep

**CONVENIENCE:** Portable generators need to be filled with gas periodically. You need to store an ample supply, and in extended outages, you have to go out in stormy weather and wait in line to refill your gas cans, if the gas station has power to run its pumps. You also need to pull your generator out, run the cords, and after power is restored, do the whole process in reverse.

Automatic generators run on propane and are designed to run for days or longer without the need for you to go out and refill the generator. They will come on by themselves and shut themselves off automatically when the power comes back on

**DAMAGE:** With a portable generator, you have to be home to get it started, and if not, sump pumps and other necessary equipment will not operate, resulting in property damage

Automatic generators will operate without you being home. Your necessary equipment will operate and save thousands of dollars of property damage

Next week, we will discuss safe and unsafe methods of using portable generators, different types of transfer switches that can be used, the advantages and disadvantages of each.

If you have any questions, please forward them to [dirtygenerators@yahoo.com](mailto:dirtygenerators@yahoo.com), and we will try and answer them. We will also answer some of the questions in future articles