

HOME ELECTRONICS

When power stops — you need a generator



BARRY JENSEN

The essence of electronics is electrical power, either alternating current from the wall or direct current from a battery.

But what if the electricity stops? This can be especially tough if you run a home-based business.

The most reasonable solution to a temporary loss of power is a gasoline-powered generator.

Few people buy a generator large enough to replace all the power that is no longer coming from the wall — such generators cost too much for the average homeowner.

But if you run a business from your home that must have power available at all times, you probably can write off part of the cost of a gasoline-powered generator.

Before you buy a generator, decide how long a power outage you want to prepare for. The longer the outage you want to be protected from, the bigger the generator will be and the more expensive it will be.

Three days is a reasonable number. If

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the outage were going to be longer, you would have time to move yourself and your home business.

Once you have decided how long, how much power you will need?

A home freezer will keep food frozen for three days if you don't open it.

But a refrigerator will not keep foods cold for three days, especially if you open it.

Some changes in your way of life can accommodate a temporary lack of power. You could heat water over a flame to make instant coffee. A towel could replace a 1,200-watt hairdryer. Paper plates and plastic knives and forks can

make running a dishwasher unnecessary for several days.

If you own a battery-powered radio or battery-powered television, you don't need to generate power for them.

You likely will want enough gasoline-generated power to replace:

- Sump pump
- Garage door opener
- A couple of lamps
- Portable fans
- Portable telephone
- Answering machine
- Refrigerator (run at night)
- A security system
- Electric blanket
- Computer (home business)

Printer (home business)
Fax (home business)

To find out how large a generator you need, add up the watts needed by each item you want to provide for. The wattage is listed on the back of most appliances.

When you have totaled up the number of watts, add 10 percent to take care of start-up of the mechanical motors, such as the one on the refrigerator. This is the number of watts you need to replace.

Once you have decided on the size of the generator you want, you'll have to look at the amount of gasoline it would use over, say, three days.

Store the gasoline outside, NOT inside, the house. Unless you regularly use this gasoline, you will need to add preservatives to it to prevent the formation of lacquers.

Barry Jensen welcomes your comments and suggestions for topics for future columns. His telephone number is 313-853-2125. This number has voice mail attached, so you can call at any time.

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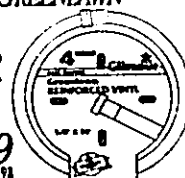
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