

# PORTABLE GENERATOR SAFETY INFORMATION

Portable generators provide temporary low-power solutions for essential home appliances during power outages. However, they pose risks, so it is important to be aware of the applicable code requirements and to know and follow the generator's installation and operating instructions to prevent serious injury or even death.

## Standby / Stationary Generators:

Standby generators, or stationary "whole house" generators must be permanently installed by a licensed professional and may require a permit. For more information, please see Form CE-1419.



## CONTACT US

### Building Code Enforcement



1002 Washington Avenue  
Houston, Texas 77002  
Monday - Friday  
8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

### Electrical Inspections:



832-394-8860



Residential.pwrbackupsystems@  
houstontx.gov

### Plumbing Inspections:



832-394-8870



hpcplumbingsection@houstontx.gov



Building Code Enforcement Website  
[bit.ly/4371OjC](https://bit.ly/4371OjC)



THE HOUSTON  
PERMITTING CENTER

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FORM NO: CE-1420 REV 10/02/2025

# HOUSTON CODE REQUIREMENTS

While a permit or inspection may not be required, the Houston Construction Code's minimum requirements for portable generator installation and use still apply.

## Houston Fire Code, Section 1204:

- **Must be** listed and labeled to meet Underwriters Laboratories Standard 2201 (UL 2201) and used according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Keep at **least 5 feet** from windows, doors, air intakes, and combustible walls.
- **20 feet** is recommended to reduce carbon monoxide hazards.
- **Do not use** indoors or in enclosed spaces such as garages.
- Use extension cords and temporary wiring with **ground-fault circuit interrupter protection**.
- **Never** refuel while the generator is running.
- Place a portable fire extinguisher (minimum rating 2-A:20-B:C) **within 50 feet**.

**If connected to fixed gas piping or the power grid, it requires a utility release from Center Point Energy.**



# GENERAL SAFETY TIPS

## Prevent Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Portable generators release carbon monoxide (CO), a toxic, deadly gas that has no color or odor.

### To stay safe:

- Only use generators outdoors in well-ventilated areas.
- Never run a generator in a garage, even with doors or windows open. Fans will not prevent carbon monoxide buildup.
- Keep generators at least 20 feet away from doors, windows, and vents, with exhaust directed away from the home.
- Install working carbon monoxide alarms in central locations on every level of your home and outside sleeping areas.

## Prevent Electric Shock and Electrocutation

Generators use combustible fuel and produce electricity, which can create serious electrical hazards.

### To reduce risks:

- Inspect cords before use. Do not use cords with cuts, tears, or damage.
- Protect cords during operation so they are not pinched, crushed, or run over.
- Do not use a generator in wet conditions. Keep it dry and protected from rain or standing water.
- Use only heavy-duty, outdoor-rated extension cords for appliances connected to the generator.

## Prevent Fire Ignition and Spread

Fuel, oil, or combustible materials near a generator can cause fire or explosion.

### Safety Tips:

- Let the generator cool completely before refueling. Hot surfaces can ignite gasoline vapors.
- Store fuel outside living areas in labeled, non-glass safety containers.
- Never place a generator on or under decks or porches.
- Do not use generators in garages, sheds, or other enclosed areas.
- Keep a fire extinguisher within fifty feet of the generator.

# TIPS FROM THE TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF INSURANCE

- Read the owner's manual carefully to understand all safety risks.
- Run the generator outdoors in well-ventilated areas at least twenty feet from doors, windows, and vents. Wind can blow carbon monoxide into the home.
- Never use a generator in a garage, even if the door is open.
- Turn off the generator and let it cool completely before refueling. Do not store fuel inside the home.
- Ensure working carbon monoxide detectors are installed in the home.
- Use a heavy-duty, outdoor-rated extension cord for appliances connected to the generator.