



Providing Your Own Power During an Outage

How to sort the many choices in home generators

By Paul Wesslund, NRECA

If you're wondering whether to buy a home generator in case of a power outage, you're not alone. Backup power sources have gotten so popular that manufacturers now offer a wide range of choices.

Options run from pull-start gasoline models costing a few hundred dollars to permanent outdoor installations for several thousand dollars. That variety makes it easier to get exactly what you want, but harder to choose.

A good first step is to think about what you want a home generator to do. Do you just want to keep your phone charged? Do you want to make sure food doesn't spoil in your refrigerator? Do you want to make sure you have heat and air conditioning through an extended outage? Answering those questions will require you to know the wattage of the appliances you want to run so you know the capacity of the generator you need.

You might also ask if you really need a generator. The average U.S. home is without power about seven hours a year. Is that enough to justify the expense and attention?

Another part of your planning should be contacting your electric co-op to get their expert advice on the best and safest fit for your home.

Here's what to know about the four basic choices in home generators:

Portable generators are small enough that you might even take them on camping trips. The costs for these can vary—from more

than \$2,000 to as low as \$400. Most should be able to run a refrigerator or a window air conditioner. Special attention to safety is required. They should never be used indoors, not even in a garage. The carbon monoxide they produce can be deadly in minutes. The Consumer Product Safety Commission reports that 85 people die each year from carbon monoxide poisoning caused by gasoline-powered portable generators. Portable generators should be operated more than 20 feet from the house and be connected only with outdoor extension cords matched to the wattage being used. Look for models with a carbon monoxide detector and automatic shutoff.

Appliances should be plugged in to the generator—the generator should never be plugged into an outlet or your home's electrical system.

You should also spend the money to have an electrician install a transfer switch. That acts as a mini-circuit breaker to protect your appliances and can be an easier way to connect the house to the generator.

Inverter generators are higher-tech versions of standard portable generators. The power they produce changes to match what the appliances are using, so although they are a little more expensive, they use fuel more efficiently and make less noise. The same safety guidelines apply to both inverter and standard portable generators.



Standby generators can cost \$7,000, plus installation, but they have the benefit of turning on automatically during a power outage and running your whole house. They're typically a permanently-mounted outdoor unit that's connected to your home electrical system and runs on propane or natural gas. It must be installed by a professional electrician.

Power stations, also known as batteries, charge themselves up while the power is on. They're not as powerful as some of the other options, and can be more expensive, but they're quiet, easy to operate, and some are designed to look good hanging on the wall. They can cost between \$400 and \$6,000. One common use of power stations is to pair them with rooftop solar panels so that electricity from the sun can be available even at night.

With the increased intensity of storms and our reliance on electronic devices, power outages can be a bigger concern these days. Technology now gives you many choices for how to react, whether you want to make sure you're never without power, or you're willing to just light a candle and wait for the lights to come back on.

Paul Wesslund writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56% of the nation's landscape.



Power Your Home with a Briggs & Stratton Home Standby Generator

You can be confident that South Central Electric works hard every day to keep your lights on. For those times when mother nature strikes, we still have you covered with our generator program. You can purchase a whole home Briggs & Stratton Power Protect generator from South Central Electric. If you lose power, the generator automatically takes over. When power is restored, it automatically shuts down. Power when you need it without the hassles of portable or PTO generators.

Estimated cost of \$9,000 to \$12,500 includes the following:

- Briggs & Stratton® Power Protect DX with industry leading 10-year warranty.
- Minnesota winter ready with battery warmer, oil heater & battery charger.
- Automatic transfer switch.
- **Electrician installation.**



*Generators run on LP or Natural Gas.
Estimate does not include costs of gas
installation from your gas provider.*

**Call our office to learn more at
(507) 375-3164**



ONLINE PAYMENT & BILLING w/ SMARTHUB

Pay your bills on-line with South Central Electric's on-line bill payment system, SmartHub. Download the SmartHub app for your mobile device or tablet from the APP Store or Google Play.

To get started visit our web site southcentralelectric.com and click on the SmartHub logo. Once you are at the SmartHub site you'll have to sign up as a first time user by clicking the "New User" link and follow the prompts.

SCEA WATER HEATER PROGRAM

SCEA's peak shave water heater program provides members with a Marathon water heater at a discounted price for participating in the load management program.

The cost for water heaters is **\$750**. This is a great value for members. SCEA pays the cost of the electrician to wire the water heater and radio control. The member would pay any costs incurred by a plumber.





WELCOME LUCUS SANDBO, MEMBER SERVICES MANAGER

Lucus Sandbo has joined SCEA as the new Member Services Manager. He previously worked at St. James Electric and brings over 20 years of experience in the electrical field. He also serves our community as the Fire Chief of the St. James Fire Department. Lucas lives in St. James with his wife and four kids. Please join us in welcoming Lucas to South Central Electric.

Connect with Minnesota's Electric Cooperatives at **FARMFEST**

Join Minnesota's rural electric cooperatives at Farmfest from August 5-7. As Minnesota's premier agricultural event, Farmfest attracts nearly 30,000 attendees and hosts over 500 exhibits and vendors in rural Redwood County each year.

Farmfest serves as a vital platform for addressing political and educational issues impacting farmers and rural communities across Minnesota. From policy discussions to showcasing the latest technological advancements in agriculture, the event offers valuable insights and networking opportunities for all attendees.

Minnesota electric cooperatives have a long history of participating in Farmfest and connecting with our agricultural partners. Be sure to visit our booths where we will be

showcasing tools and technology to make outdoor work easier and demonstrating our commitment to safety with an interactive electrical safety exhibit. Learn firsthand about essential safety measures to keep you and your family safe. See a live safety demonstration illustrating the need for caution when working near or moving large equipment around powerlines. Don't miss this opportunity to connect with Minnesota's electric cooperatives and discover how we're empowering farmers and rural communities across the state.

Minnesota's electric cooperatives are proud to supply the electrical needs of most farms across the state, serving members in every Minnesota county.



Visit us along with other
Minnesota Electric Cooperatives,
at Farmfest 2025 and enter for
a chance to win a grand prize!

FARMFEST 2025

AUGUST 5,6,7 • REDWOOD FALLS, MN

Bring this coupon to Booth #2201

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE# _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____

You must be a member of one of the participating
electric cooperatives to be eligible to win.



South Central Electric Association
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

ANATOMY OF A DISTRIBUTION POWER POLE

A power line is used to carry electricity from generation sources to substations, then to homes and businesses. The poles holding these lines and equipment come in different sizes and can be made of metal, wood or fiberglass.

1. **Insulators.** Insulators support wires and prevent undesired flow of electricity. They are made of porcelain or polymer.
2. **Utility pole.** A wood, metal or fiberglass pole weighing up to half a ton. Typically 30-60 feet long, these poles are anchored 5-8 feet into the ground.
3. **Fused cutout.** Provides fault protection by acting like a circuit breaker and isolating the tap line from the main line.
4. **Transformer.** A device that reduces the high voltage to a level safe for delivery to the customer, such as 120 or 240 volts.
5. **Main line neutral.** This line is the neutral conductor in a distribution circuit.
6. **Service drop wire.** An overhead electrical line running from the utility pole to a customer's building or other premises.
7. **Pole ground wire.** This wire is connected to a metal rod driven 8 feet into the ground. Its job is to ground the electrical system.
8. **Guy wire and anchor.** A wire that helps stabilize the power pole.

Never nail posters or other items to power poles. These can cause a safety hazard for lineworkers.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

Replace your cooling system's filter regularly to maintain strong airflow and boost energy efficiency. A clean filter means your system doesn't have to work as hard, saving energy and lowering your utility bills. Factors like allergies and pets in the home can impact how often filters should be replaced. Check the filter every month and replace it as needed. Changing filters regularly also reduces wear and tear on your cooling system, helping extend the life of the unit.

Source: energy.gov



**ALWAYS CALL
BEFORE YOU DIG**



Official monthly newsletter

South Central Electric

71176 Tiell Dr., PO Box 150
St. James, MN 56081-0150
(507) 375-3164

Outages: (888) 805-7232

E-mail address:

sce@southcentralelectric.com

Web:

www.southcentralelectric.com

Office hours:

7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Jim Haler, General Manager

Board of Directors

President, Ron Jorgenson

Vice President, Michael Miest

Secretary, Brad Asendorf

Treasurer, Matt Peters

Mark Sandberg, Director

Steve Sell, Director

Bill Kunz, Director

The Board meets the fourth Tuesday of the month at South Central Electric's building at 71176 Tiell Dr., St. James, MN.

Please see our website for a summary of the board meetings.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at program.intake@usda.gov.

**VISIT
OUR WEBSITE!**

www.southcentralelectric.com

**FOLLOW US
on Facebook!**

