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Play It Safe When Using Portable Generators

Storm season is upon us, which means greater potential for power outages. If you're planning to use a portable generator in the event of an outage, Altamaha EMC reminds you to play it safe.

With proper use and maintenance, portable generators can provide great convenience during an outage. However, when generators are used incorrectly, they can be extremely hazardous. In a 2022 report, the Consumer Product Safety Commission estimated 85 U.S. consumers die every year from carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning caused by gasoline-powered portable generators.

Here are 10 do's and don'ts to keep in mind when using portable generators:

- **DO:** Install backup CO alarms.
- **DO:** Keep children and pets away from portable generators at all times.
- **DO:** Position generators at least 25 feet outside the home, away from doors, windows and vents that can allow CO to enter the home.
- **DO:** Ensure your generator is properly grounded. Use a portable ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) to prevent electric shock injuries.
- **DO:** Use three-pronged extension cords that are rated to handle the load of the generator. Inspect extension cords for cuts, frays or other damage before use.
- **DON'T:** Operate a generator inside your home or an enclosed (or partially-enclosed) space. Generators produce high levels of CO, which can be deadly.
- **DON'T:** Open windows or doors while the generator is running.
- **DON'T:** Rely on generators as a full-time source of power. They should only be used temporarily or in emergency situations to power essential equipment or appliances.
- **DON'T:** Overload generators. They should only be used to power essential equipment. Make sure your generator can handle the load of the items you plan to power.
- **DON'T:** Connect generators directly into household wiring unless you have an appropriate transfer switch installed. If a generator is connected to a home's wiring without a transfer switch, power can backfeed along power lines and electrocute utility lineworkers making repairs.

Before you operate a portable generator, be sure to thoroughly read the owner's manual for important safety information and tips.
Photo Source: Honda.

While generators provide convenience during power outages, they can quickly become hazardous––even deadly––if improperly operated. Before you operate a portable generator, be sure to thoroughly read the owner's manual for important safety information and tips.

If you have questions about proper use of portable generators, we're here to help. Give us a call at (912) 526-8181.

Surge Protection 101

A power surge is an unexpected increase in voltage, and it can occur from a variety of sources. Regardless of the cause, power surges can majorly damage electronic devices and equipment in your home.

Let's look at common causes of power surges and how you can protect your sensitive electronics.

One of the most common causes of a power surge is lightning. Most of us have experienced this during a severe thunderstorm. When lightning strikes an electrical system, the excess current must be channeled somewhere––unfortunately in many cases, it's sent through a home. Your best bet is to unplug all unused devices and electronics during severe thunderstorms.

Another common cause of power surges is electrical overload. This happens when devices or appliances are plugged into an outlet that can't handle the required amount of voltage, or if multiple devices are plugged into one outlet through an extension cord. If you're experiencing power surges due to electrical overload, it's time to call a qualified electrician to evaluate your home's circuits and electrical needs.

Faulty wiring in a home can also cause power surges. Damaged or exposed wires can cause spikes in voltage, creating a potentially dangerous situation. If you notice signs of faulty wiring, like visible burns on outlets, buzzing sounds from outlets or frequently tripped circuit breakers, your home may be due for electrical wiring repairs and updates.

Surges can also occur after a power outage. Sometimes, when electricity is being restored and reconnected, it's common to experience a quick surge in current. Similar to advice for a surge caused by lightning, it's best to unplug sensitive electronics during the outage––then wait to plug them back in after power is fully restored.

Aside from unplugging devices when you suspect a power surge, there are two ways you can take additional precautions to protect electronics in your home.

Point-of-use surge protection devices, like power strips, can protect electronics during most surges. But remember, not all power strips include surge protection, so read the packaging label carefully before you buy, and don't overload the power strip with too many devices. You can also install specialized electrical outlets that offer additional surge protection. Talk to a trusted electrician to learn more.

Another option is a whole-home surge protector, which can help protect your home from larger, more powerful surges. In most cases, whole-home suppressors are connected to your home's service panel and include features like thermal fuses and notification capabilities that indicate when a device has been impacted by a surge. Whole-home surge protection prices vary based on the size of the home and suppressor. Whole-home suppressors should always be connected by a licensed electrician, so consider the cost of installation as well.

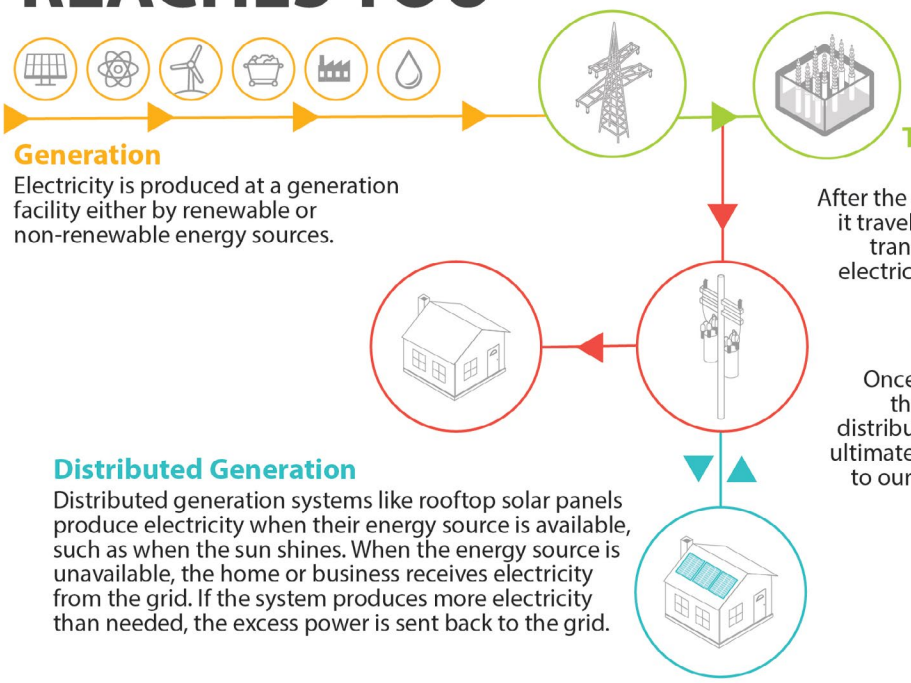
Occasional power surges are inevitable, but by unplugging devices when you think a surge may occur and using additional levels of protection like power strips or whole-home suppressors, you can better safeguard your sensitive electronics and devices.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Washing windows and screens is a great way to practice energy efficiency during spring cleaning. Clean windows and screens make your home brighter by allowing more sunlight in, reducing the need for lamps and fixtures. Clean screens also allow more fresh air in the home when the windows are open to recycle indoor air. Natural light and clean air are energy savers, and they enhance overall health and productivity.

Source: energy.gov

HOW ELECTRICITY REACHES YOU



Generation
Electricity is produced at a generation facility either by renewable or non-renewable energy sources.

Transmission Lines and Substations
After the electricity is generated, it travels through high-voltage transmission power lines to electric substations, where the voltage is lowered.

Distribution Lines
Once the voltage is lowered, the electricity travels over distribution power lines, which ultimately deliver the electricity to our homes and businesses.

Distributed Generation
Distributed generation systems like rooftop solar panels produce electricity when their energy source is available, such as when the sun shines. When the energy source is unavailable, the home or business receives electricity from the grid. If the system produces more electricity than needed, the excess power is sent back to the grid.

Director Bill Benton earns Credentialed Cooperative Director certificate from NRECA

Altamaha EMC would like to congratulate Mr. Bill Benton, District 1 director, on earning the Credentialed Cooperative Director certificate from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

The Credentialed Cooperative Director is the first part of NRECA's three-part Director Education Program. The CCD program consists of five courses that focus on basic governance knowledge and the essential skills required of cooperative directors. The CCD prepares directors to fulfill their fiduciary duty as elected officials serving on behalf of their membership. Upon completion of all five CCD courses, directors are awarded the Credentialed Cooperative Director Certificate by NRECA.

Mr. Benton will now begin working toward completing The Board Leadership Certificate (BLC). Altamaha EMC commends Mr. Benton on his dedication to expanding his knowledge of the energy industry and cooperative business model.

FFA Students Participate in Area 4 Electrification Career Development Event

Local students put knowledge of wiring and electricity to use during a recent competition where a lucrative career can be the ultimate prize.

Ridge Swain of Treutlen County High School, Evan Hardeman of Montgomery County High School, and Jaxon Lee of Swainsboro High School competed in the Area 4 Electrification Career Development Event.

This competition, sponsored by Georgia Electric Membership Cooperatives and FFA, is designed to teach students about wiring and the national standards for safe installation while developing skills that can lead to rewarding careers. It also creates a pipeline of apprentice linemen for rural electric cooperatives that bring power to farmers across Georgia.

Each participant takes a multiple-choice written exam, gives an oral presentation describing necessary steps to complete a specific electrical task, and completes a timed, real-life wiring problem testing their knowledge of the National Electric Code.

The contest reinforces electrical wiring as taught in the vocational agriculture education program and expands the student's grasp of electric energy and the role of EMCs in Georgia's energy future. Any active Georgia FFA member who is in grades 9, 10, 11, or 12 can participate to compete for scholarship funds to use at any college, university or vocational school.

Evan Hardeman and teacher Brittany Braddy of Montgomery County High School.

ABOVE: Jaxon Lee and teacher Ashley Henry of Swainsboro High School.

AT LEFT: Ridge Swain and teacher Michael Atkins of Treutlen County High School.

Photo Credit: COURTESY GEORGIA GROWN

Member RECIPES

Smoked Sausage and Turnip Green Cornbread Stuffing Bites

Ingredients

10 ounces (about 8 cups) turnip greens, chopped
1 teaspoon vegetable or canola oil
1 link (about 3.5 ounces) Andouille or other smoked sausage, diced into 1/8-inch cubes
2 cups cornbread stuffing mix, divided
1/2 cup finely chopped onion
2 eggs, slightly beaten
4 tablespoons butter, melted
1/3 cup grated Thomasville Tomme cheese
1 clove minced garlic
Pinch red pepper flakes, optional

Comeback Sauce

3/4 cup mayonnaise
2-1/2 tablespoons ketchup
1 teaspoon apple cider vinegar
1 to 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
1 teaspoon spicy brown mustard
1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
1 teaspoon hot sauce
1/2 teaspoon finely minced fresh garlic
1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
1/2 teaspoon onion powder or onion salt
1/2 teaspoon smoked paprika
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Recipe by Georgia Grown Chef Olivia Rader
For recipes from farms and producers across our state, visit www.georgiagrown.com.

GEORGIA grown

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Once water is boiling, blanch greens for 2 minutes, in batches if necessary. Shock in ice water and let sit until cold. Heat oil in a small pan over medium heat until almost smoking. Add diced sausage and brown until most of the fat has been rendered, about 5 minutes. Transfer to a small plate lined with a paper towel and let cool. Place 1 cup of the cornbread stuffing mix into food processor, process into fine breadcrumbs. Transfer to a bowl and set aside. Note: This will be the breadcrumb coating.Drain turnip greens very thoroughly, removing ice pieces. Using your hands, squeeze out all water, then place into the food processor and pulse until finely chopped. Place chopped turnip greens into a large mixing bowl. Add the remaining cup of cornbread stuffing mix, onion, eggs, butter, cheese, garlic, red pepper flakes (if using) and cooled sausage. Mix thoroughly. Shape mixture into balls about 1 inch in diameter until all the mixture is used up. Coat each ball in reserved breadcrumbs. Place on an 18x13-inch baking pan, spaced at least 1/2 inch apart. Cover and refrigerate for at least 1 hour. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Bake stuffing bites for 15-20 minutes, until balls are firm to the touch. Prepare Comeback Sauce by whisking together all sauce ingredients in a bowl until smooth. Taste and season with salt if necessary. Serve warm stuffing bites with Comeback Sauce as a dipping sauce. Note: Store leftover sauce for up to a week in the refrigerator. Serves 8-10.