



Ken
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Owner of Slate
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Services

Exclusively in the Blue Valley Times

Backup Safely

If you are reading this you already survived the latest power outage. Knowledge is power but not the kind that will keep your freezer cold. Safety is always the first aspect of backup power that needs to be taken into account. Electrocution is always a concern but many more people die from carbon monoxide poisoning than electrocution when running their home on backup power. If some of the examples I give sound obvious, please bear with me because every one of them has caused the death of one or more people. Never run a generator in the basement. Not even if you have doors and windows open. Never run a generator inside your garage. Even if it is near the overhead door and the door is open. Never place a generator so close to your home that air movement could carry the exhaust inside your home. Some new generators have carbon monoxide detectors built into them and they will shut off if a high level is detected. That should not be needed but I assume they are just trying to keep uneducated people alive and reduce liability for manufacturers. The levels that will affect you are astonishingly low. If you filled a room with yourself and a million marbles of air and 100 marbles were carbon monoxide, you would feel disoriented, nauseas, and probably have an intense headache in less than an hour. If 300 of those marbles were carbon monoxide, you would likely be dead in the same timeframe. CO is no joke.

So when the power goes out, you should have a plan to use your generator. A place it can be operated far enough from the house. The second part of the plan is how to integrate it into the electrical system of your home. A transfer switch is best because if you send power out onto the grid, you could very likely injure or kill a person working on those lines. So making a plug for your dryer receptacle to send power back into the house is definitely sketchy unless you are skilled in electrical work.

The best thing you can do to avoid death or injury is to think and plan for backup power BEFORE the storm. It is guaranteed that your mind will not be functioning quite as well under the duress of freight train winds and pouring rain in the dark as it would be on a sunny Saturday morning. Failing to plan is planning to fail. You could pay for it with your life.

Ken Field is the owner of Slate Belt Energy and Field's Service, Inc. As a certified energy rater and contractor, he is qualified to assess every aspect of energy usage and prescribe solutions to save energy. He can be reached at 610-759-6306 or email Ken@FieldsService.com

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