

## The home generator guide

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I like to buy Kindle books like this before I am making a major purchase. The six dollars I spent on this probably saved me and 100 times that much buying a generator that would work.

My situation – I think it is probably not too uncommon – is that the power goes out fairly often in my neighborhood. We have electric heat, which means that we're freezing in the dark when it does. The most obvious solution seems to be to have emergency backup electricity.

The introduction of the book tells you how that can be accomplished properly. Basically, start with five figures in US dollars that you are ready to spend. Dedicate some of your real estate to siting a generator, and be prepared to invest a little bit of time making sure that the thing is always ready to go.

We wanted to go something cheaper. We have a large, well insulated attic and the generator salesman and implied that might be able to put a portable generator up there. I wanted to know why not. Here is a short list.

1. Start with carbon monoxide. Even if it is in the attic, and vented to the outside, the system still presents a risk. After reading the book I raised my and estimate of the risk.
2. It would be noisy. The book has a pretty lengthy discussion of the noise the generators make. I hear them in my neighborhood, and knew that they were not quiet. The book gives a lengthy assessment of how noisy, and how to do something about it.
3. What kind of fuel. I had imagined gasoline. I learned the gasoline deteriorates over time and storage. You cannot keep it for months on end, ready for immediate use when the crisis hits. Here the book offers alternatives. The best solution would be gas, either from the gas company itself or bottled gas. Diesel is a pretty good solution because it is much more stable.
4. Also on the subject of fuel, I got an idea of the volumes involved. 15 gallons a day is a guesstimate for my situation. At about seven pounds per gallon, that means carrying 100 pounds per day after the attic. There is also the question of where to store that much highly flammable stuff. Up in the attic? Not a good idea.
5. The book gave a definitive answer to another of my questions: how to integrate generator power with municipal power. The answer: don't do it. Either install a transfer switch, whereby either municipal or the generator is the sole power source, or run extension cords from the generator to the essential appliances you need to operate.

So I conclude that the best way to do it is the expensive way – an outdoor generator, away from the house, in a weatherproof shelter, protected from thieves. Get an electrician to wire it properly. When all is said and done, it isn't cheap.

I'm doing a similar analysis of kerosene heaters. Must be more than one way to skin a cat. In any case, this was a very good investment of \$6. If and when we buy a generator, I'll be able to ask intelligent questions to be sure we get what we need.