

ELECTRICAL SAFETY GENERATOR CONNECTIONS

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With the recent winter storms and other cataclysmic events causing large power outages there has been an increase in generator use by property owners in their homes. A temporary connection of a generator to an electrical panel can be used to back feed power and provide temporary power to the home.

Back feeding concerns

Back feeding is the connection of a portable generator directly to a home's electrical wiring either directly at the electrical panel or by connection to a receptacle wired from the electrical panel. If not connected through a proper transfer switch, back feeding an electrical panel can be very dangerous. Downed utility lines may become energized if back feeding is done improperly, which presents a danger both to utility workers as well as the general public. The lack of a transfer switch can also be dangerous to property owners when attempting to remove the connection once normal power has been restored, further endangering themselves and their property. Care must also be taken not to overload a portable generator causing low voltages and damage to appliances and electronics.

Generator connection best practices

If you choose to install a system to back feed a generator for power outages, it is recommended to contact a licensed electrical contractor for assistance in accomplishing this in a safe code compliant manner.

The Oregon Electrical Specialty Code requires the use of a transfer switch or other safety devices to prevent unsafe back feeding. This work requires a permit and should only be done by a properly licensed electrician. You can check a contractor's license status on our website at: [Oregon.gov/bcd/licensing/Pages/search](https://www.oregon.gov/bcd/licensing/Pages/search).

For more information about obtaining electrical permits contact your local building department. Local contact information can be found here: [Oregon.gov/bcd/lbddd](https://www.oregon.gov/bcd/lbddd).