

# **Generator Use: A Hurricane Preparedness Guide for Northwest Florida Homeowners**

## **Prepared and Presented by McCombs Electrical Heating Air**

Hurricane season is a reality for those of us living along the Gulf Coast, and it brings unique challenges. At McCombs Electrical Heating Air, we understand what it takes to keep your family safe, comfortable, and prepared when storms threaten our communities in Milton, Pace, and Pensacola. This comprehensive guide is packed with tips, expert advice, and actionable steps designed specifically for Northwest Florida homeowners.

Download and print this guide today so you're always ready when storm season rolls in.

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### **Portable Generator Power Safety Tips**

Portable generators can serve as a lifeline during power outages but also pose serious safety risks if misused. At McCombs Electrical Heating Air, your safety is our priority. Follow these expert tips, many of which align with Florida Power & Light (FPL) and EREC recommendations, to use your generator safely while powering your home and avoid access denied issues when seeking online resources.

#### **Key Generator Safety Practices**

- **Operate Outdoors Only**  
Always place your generator at least 20 feet away from your home and never near open windows or doors. This prevents odorless, deadly carbon monoxide (CO) fumes from entering your living spaces. Installing a battery-powered CO detector adds another layer of reassurance.

- **Inspect Your Cables**

Use heavy-duty, outdoor-rated extension cords to connect appliances to your generator. Inspect these cords regularly to ensure they're free of fraying or wear.

- **Prevent Backfeeding**

Hiring a licensed electrician to install an approved transfer switch ensures your generator doesn't accidentally send electricity back into power lines. This protects utility workers and your home's electrical system.

- **Handle Fuel Safely**

After shutting off your generator and letting it cool, refuel only with gas stored in approved containers. Refueling a hot generator could ignite the fuel.

### **Refrigerator Tip**

Refrigerators often need to run just a few hours daily to keep food cool. Use this strategy to conserve fuel while ensuring items stay at safe temperatures.

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## **Standby Generators and Why Transfer Switches Matter**

For those in hurricane-prone Northwest Florida, a standby generator is a must. Unlike portable units, standby systems provide continuous, automated power during an outage, keeping your home running smoothly when the unexpected happens.

### **Benefits of Standby Generators**

- **Power Everything**

From your HVAC system to the fridge, a standby model covers all your essential appliances seamlessly.

- **Added Convenience**

WiFi-enabled models allow you to monitor and manage your generator remotely, wherever you are.

### **The Role of Transfer Switches**

A transfer switch safely transitions power from utility lines to your generator and prevents backfeeding. At McCombs Electrical Heating Air, we specialize in installing FPL-compliant transfer switches, ensuring the safety of your home and utility crews. Trust us to set your Pensacola, Pace, or Milton home up for success when the lights go out.

### **EREC GenerLink System for Local Homes Access**

Homes in Escambia River Electric Cooperative's (EREC) service area have a unique, reliable solution for safe generator power. The **GenerLink system** is tailor-made for local homeowners with portable generators.

### **Why Choose GenerLink?**

- **Simplified Connection**

GenerLink connects directly to your home's electrical system via your breaker panel. No extension cords are needed.

- **Safety Guaranteed**

By disconnecting your home from the grid, GenerLink eliminates the risk of backfeeding, protecting you and utility workers alike.

- **Quick Installation**

This system is installed in about 20 minutes by EREC professionals, without rewiring or major hassle.

For families in Northwest Florida serviced by EREC, GenerLink makes managing backup power easier and safer. Contact McCombs to learn more about integrating systems like GenerLink into your home.

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### **Flood Risks and What FEMA Maps Can Tell You**

Hurricanes often bring heavy rains and flooding that can devastate even inland areas. Knowing your property's flood risk is an important step in protecting your home against water damage.

#### **Use FEMA Flood Maps**

Visit FEMA's **Flood Map Service Center** at [MSC.FEMA.gov](https://MSC.FEMA.gov) to see where your home lies in relation to high-risk zones. Areas with at least a 1% annual chance of flooding are considered high-risk, and mandatory flood insurance may be required.

### **Proactive Steps to Protect Your Home**

- **Elevate Systems**

If possible, raise critical home systems like HVAC units and your electrical breaker above expected flood levels.

- **Floodproof Your Foundation**

Install sump pumps, water barriers, or drainage systems to help channel water away from your home.

Flooding doesn't respect boundaries, so preparation is essential.

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### **Unplugging Appliances and Electronics Before Evacuating**

Before leaving home ahead of a storm, take a moment to unplug certain electronics to avoid power surge damage.

#### **Checklist of Items to Unplug**

- **Sensitive Electronics**  
Unplug TVs, gaming consoles, and laptops.
- **Small Kitchen Appliances**  
Safeguard items like coffee makers and microwaves.
- **Larger Systems**  
Turn off HVAC systems and water heaters at their breaker.

For larger essentials like refrigerators, consider investing in a surge protector for added safety if evacuation guides suggest leaving it running.

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### **Protecting Electronics with Home Surge Protectors and Server Protection**

During hurricanes, lightning strikes and outages can be highly destructive to modern electronics. Enter whole-home surge protectors, your first line of defense against power spikes.

#### **Why Invest in Surge Protection?**

- **Keep Everything Safe**  
Unlike single-outlet protectors, whole-home systems shield all your electronics, from A/C units to laptops, by intercepting surges at your breaker.
- **Save Money**  
Avoid costly repair bills or having to replace damaged appliances. Additionally, some insurers may even lower your premium when surge protection is installed.

McCombs Electrical Heating Air offers professional consultation and installation for these systems, designed to fit the unique needs of homes in Milton, Pace, and Pensacola.

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### **Business Preparedness Tips for Northwest Florida**

Businesses in hurricane-prone areas need additional planning, and FPL's **Business Storm Guide** provides valuable insights.

### **Top Tips for Business Owners**

- **Know Your Flood Zone**  
Use FEMA's flood maps to determine if your property is in a high-risk area.
- **Backup Your Data**  
Ensure critical files are saved on alternate systems or in the cloud.
- **Secure Property**  
Tarps, sandbags, and plywood can protect assets and minimize damage.
- **Stay Insured**  
Review your insurance annually and document your business equipment for records.

Preparedness isn't just about weathering a storm; it's also about ensuring continued recovery afterward.

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### **Key Takeaways**

1. **Portable Generator Safety**
  - Always use generators outdoors, inspect cords, prevent backfeeding, and refuel safely.
2. **Standby Generators**
  - Ensure non-stop, whole-home power with safe, compliant installations.
3. **EREC GenerLink System**
  - For EREC service areas, GenerLink offers safe, user-friendly generator connections.
4. **Flood Risk Awareness**
  - Check FEMA flood maps, elevate systems, and consider floodproofing measures.
5. **Unplugging Electronics**
  - Disconnect sensitive electronics to avoid surge damage.
6. **Surge Protectors**

- Install whole-home surge protection for comprehensive safety during storms.

## **7. Business Preparedness**

- Follow FPL's tips to safeguard your business assets and data.

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### **Why Choose McCombs Electrical Heating Air?**

At McCombs Electrical Heating Air, we take hurricane preparedness seriously because we're part of this community too. We ensure that you have seamless access to all necessary resources and support, avoiding any access issues during critical times. Over the years, families in Milton, Pace, and Pensacola have come to trust us for tailored electrical expertise that keeps them safe, no matter what the forecast holds.

Be ready. Contact us today at **850-994-5467** or visit [www.mccombselectrical.com](http://www.mccombselectrical.com). Together, we'll make sure your home is hurricane-season ready.

Download and keep this guide handy, and you'll know exactly what to do before, during, and after a storm. Preparation today brings peace of mind tomorrow!