



**NORTHERN
SONOMA COUNTY**
AIR POLLUTION CONTROL DISTRICT

150 Matheson Street, Healdsburg, CA 95448 • PH: (707) 433-5911 • FX: (707) 433-4823

FAQ: De-energization and Permit Requirements for Standby Generators

September 2019

This message is intended only for residents and businesses within the boundaries of *Northern Sonoma County Air Pollution Control District*. This includes the areas of Sonoma County north of Windsor, and along the Russian River Valley and coast. Residents and businesses within Windsor, Santa Rosa, Sebastopol, and areas south should contact the Bay Area Air Quality Management District at 415-771-6000 or baaqmd.gov. Requirements are different for these areas.

Why this FAQ?

PG&E has notified electric power customers that it may turn-off, or de-energize, parts of the electrical grid during high-risk fire conditions. This means that with short notice, PG&E may shut-off electricity to your home, business, or equipment for 3-5 days or longer. <[PG&E de-energization forecast site](#)>

This potential de-energization has created an interest in the use of engine-powered generators to provide standby electricity. The US EPA, state of California, and air districts, such as ours have permit requirements for standby generators.

Why might a permit be required for a generator?

Internal combustion engines that power electrical generators emit pollution from the combustion of fuel. Pollution from diesel engines are of greatest concern because they emit toxic pollutants. These pollutants are regulated under federal, state, and district law for public health.

Do all generators require a permit?

It depends on the generator and how it will be used. Here is what you need to know:

- Will the engine be used only for power line outages (emergency)?
- Is the generator portable or stationary, in the same place more than 12 months (even if it is on wheels or skids)?
- Is the generator gas, propane, or diesel? If diesel, what Tier is the engine?
- What is the horsepower rating of the engine?

A generator IS NOT likely to require a permit if any one of the following is true:

- Generator has a gasoline or propane engine.
- Generator engine is less than 50 hp.
- Generator is portable, used at different locations throughout the year (for example, a rental).
- Generator is used only for power line outages (recordkeeping requirements still apply for diesel engines >50 horsepower).

A generator IS likely to require a permit if all of the following are true:

- The generator is diesel-powered;
 - over 50 horsepower;
 - is bolted to a structure or concrete pad or resides at the same location for 12 months;
 - AND is used for more than power line outages.*.
- *Note: a generator meeting all these descriptors except only being used for power line outages does not require a permit, but there are recordkeeping requirements.

Are any generators prohibited?

Yes. Any diesel engine-engine powered generator with a Tier 0, 1, or 2 designation is prohibited by law and cannot be operated or receive a permit or registration.

What about ARB's PERP program?

The California Air Resource Board (ARB) has a Portable Equipment Registration Program (PERP) where certain portable equipment, including Tier 3 or 4 diesel-engine powered generators may receive a PERP registration tag (designated by a sticker affixed to the equipment), to operate instead of an air district permit. This program has specific requirements and is restricted to portable, temporary equipment use.

Please, be safe!

- Connecting a generator directly into the wiring of your home is complex and requires professional installation with a building permit. Incorrect installation could damage your home's wiring and potentially create a fire hazard.
- Generators require the use and storage of fuel, which can be a fire hazard. Store fuel in a certified safety container in a well-ventilated area and never refuel a running generator.

How do I receive assistance?

For assistance, to verify if you need a permit, or to apply for a permit contact Northern Sonoma County Air Pollution Control District at 707-433-5911.

Engine Rule References:

- US EPA:
<https://www.epa.gov/stationary-engines>
- California Air Toxics Control Measure:
<https://ww3.arb.ca.gov/diesel/statporthome.htm>
- California Air Resource Board – Portable Equipment Registration Program (PERP):
<https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/our-work/programs/portable-equipment-registration-program-perp>