

Back-up Generator Maintenance Tips

Now that (knock on wood) the major snowstorms are behind us, and before we deal with that inevitable heat wave, we have rainy season. And as you know, heavy rains can lead to power outages, which is why it is so important to have a back-up generator. [Back-up generators](#) can last from 10,000 to 30,000 hours, although they eventually could just wear out. Given that, it is not unusual for these items to last 20 years or longer.

Essential to that, though, is maintaining your back-up generator, much like you maintain your furnace or air conditioning unit. Here are some thoughts.

Annual Maintenance

Every year, or every six months if you use it a lot, have a professional inspect your generator. This should include:

- connections, cleaning debris and ensuring all switches and breakers are in normal operating position
- Changing the engine oil and engine oil filter
- Inspecting the fuel system for leaks, as well as the fuel lines and the fuel pressure
- Inspecting and if necessary replacing the air filter and spark plugs
- Checking the battery and oil heater
- Removing corrosion from the battery, cleaning and tightening the terminals and checking the charge state
- Ensuring the transfer switch connections are tight, performing a transfer switch test, and checking for proper voltage

Ongoing Maintenance

Here are some things you can and should do either on a monthly basis or after you have just used the generator

- Run the generator
- Maintain the general cleanliness of the generator and its surroundings, including making sure no rodents are living there
- Check the oil level when the unit isn't running (if it is running wait 10 minutes). Keep the oil level as close to the full level as possible
- Check the coolant level in the overflow tank to make sure there is enough coolant
- Check the fuel level and fuel/water separators in diesel units. Add fuel and drain water as necessary. For gaseous units, check the fuel supply piping for leaks or other damages