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Should I Consider Installing a Home Emergency Standby Generator?

As a result of storm damage from Hurricane Irma, in Georgia alone, nearly 1.5 million Georgia Power and EMC customers lost power on Monday, September 11th. Two days after the storm passed, around 600,000 customers were still without power. Many Peachtree Corners residents were left without power for hours and even days. While most power outages throughout the year are relatively short in duration, extended outages (like we experienced with Irma) may result in loss of refrigerated or frozen food, discomfort without air condition, but more importantly could be life threatening for those on medical devices that require electricity for operation or charging batteries.

One way to avoid a power interruption is to install a Home Standby Generator.

What is a home generator?

A standby home generator keeps your power on during an outage. It is installed outside your house (like your AC unit) and comes on automatically, whether you're home or away. The system self-activates within seconds of a power outage. When the power to the house is restored, the system will shut off automatically and standby, awaiting the next power outage. The best part is that this type of home generator runs on propane or natural gas, so there is no refueling like a gas or diesel generator.

Can a standby generator power my entire house?

Yes, however most residents size the generator to the most essential circuits or electrical demands like their refrigerators/freezers, AC or Heat, cooking appliances, washing machine and select lighting and receptacle circuits. KOHLER Generators has a handy [Home Generator Selector](#) tool on their website to help you determine the size of the generator you will need.

How does it work?

The home generator works in conjunction with an Automatic Transfer Switch (ATS). Your ATS monitors the electricity coming from your utility company. It works 24/7 to protect your home. When the electricity coming from your utility company fails or drops below an acceptable level (brownout), the ATS signals the generator to start. After a few seconds to allow the generator to develop full power, the ATS "transfers" the load of the selected circuits over to the

generator. Your time without power is minimal ... a few seconds. Once the power to the house is restored by the utility company, the ATS will automatically detect this and transfer the load back to your utility power company. The generator will then automatically shut down and go back into standby mode to await the next power outage.

How much does this cost?

A home Generator plus installation typically starts under \$6,000. However, the total cost will vary based on your power and installation needs. When pricing a home generator system, you should consider generator size and costs, installation and permits. Most power companies that sell and install home generators are turn key operations. Home improvement stores sell these systems as well and have their own installers.

Many home generation systems were permitted and installed in Peachtree Corners this year. One family, for example, had a new system installed and operational the Friday before the storm. As it turns out, the neighborhood power went off on Monday and was off for over 19 hours. That family, however had no loss of power except for the momentary delay in the transfer switch.

Please call our office at 678-691-1207 for any questions about these systems, associated permitting, or any other questions about the building codes.

Mike Sargent, Building Official