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**August 27, 2003****Safety Alert For Immediate Release**

### **Safe Use of Portable Standby Generators During Power Blackouts**

**MISSISSAUGA, ON** – The recent power shortages experienced throughout Ontario has prompted consumers who want to ensure a readily available power supply in the event of electrical outages or interruptions to consider the purchase and use of portable standby generators as a power back-up system.

Ken Brightwell, electrical safety code technical advisor with the Electrical Safety Authority (ESA), warns that if not installed correctly, portable generators can introduce far-ranging electrical fire and electrical hazards into the home affecting not only owners and their families, but their neighbors and utility workers as well.

Mr. Brightwell, provides regular advice and guidance on electrical safety standards and the safe use of electrical products, says portable generators were not designed to be connected into a home wiring system to provide standby power to an entire residence. Although they can be adapted for this use, professional installation and inspection are critical.

“Our primary concern,” says, Mr. Brightwell, “is for the do-it-yourselfers who believe they have some electrical expertise. They are quite often the most dangerous people in the neighborhood.” “We find people will make up a double male-ended electrical cord (two three-headed plugs) and insert one end into the generator and the other into a receptacle in their home. This is extremely dangerous, because there is no transfer device to properly direct the flow of electricity, once the regular power supply returns. This could result in the home generator feeding into the utility system, putting power workers, and perhaps even neighbors, at risk.” An even greater danger, he says, is to children who could trip over the cord and dislodge it, exposing metal parts and risking electrocution from exposure to 120 or 240 volts.

The Electrical Safety Authority recommends that consumers who intend to buy a standby generator as a backup home power supply work with a qualified licensed electrician or electrical contractor to assist them in determining the size and voltage required and to ensure the unit can be safely hooked up in their home. Consumers are also advised to:

Select units that carry a product approval label from recognized safety agencies. This label indicates the unit has the proper connection receptacles and circuit breakers to provide fire protection (i.e. CSA International, Ulc,OMNI, Entella, etc.) Purchase the appropriate generator accessories, including an approved transfer device or switch and properly sized connector cord and plugs. Some manufacturers offer a complete generator package, ready for installation. Hire a licensed electrical contractor or electrician to install the unit. Have the installation inspected by the Electrical Safety Authority. Not only is this required by law, but it provides a second opinion that the generator has been properly grounded and bonded for ultimate safety.

In addition:

Read and follow the owner’s manual for installation, usage and maintenance instruction.

Remember that a generator is a fuel-fired appliance and needs to be operated outdoors in a well-ventilated area to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.

The Electrical Safety Authority is a self-funded, not-for-profit organization mandated to ensure compliance to the Ontario Electrical Safety Code in the electrical industry as well as in residential, commercial and industrial markets.

**For more information, visit our website at [www.esasafe.com](http://www.esasafe.com) or call:**

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