

## Generators

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With everything that has gone on in northern New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine and Quebec, have you been stimulated to check your generator out?

The Katolight Corporation (Katolight Corporation, 3201 Third Avenue, Box 3229, Mankato, MN, 56002-3229), a manufacturer of standby generators for agricultural and industrial purposes, suggests a service and maintenance program for all generators. It is as follows: “Katolight Corporation recommends that all standby engine generator sets be started on a weekly basis and run with all available system loads for a minimum of 30 minutes. Generator sets should be exercised at a level that exceeds 50% system load, or to 30% of the nameplate rating which ever is greater.

Typically if the unit exercise load does not meet the 50/30 rule listed above the unit should be run at 80% of rated load or greater, for 2 to 4 hours once a year to prevent possible wet stacking. \*These are preventative maintenance measures and do not match NFPA 110. Katolight Corporation recommendations exceed the NFPA 110 in frequency of exercise, and in load run duration.

\* National Fire Protection Association Code Number 110, chapter 6, section 4 is the reference for this. “ (taken with permission from the Katolight Corporation homepage ([www.katolight.com](http://www.katolight.com)), Copyright 1997).

This sounds like an additional chore and it is, but it is one that needs to be done. When was the last time you ran your generator? I know, the last time you needed it. Just like any other piece of equipment, generators need maintenance and service on a regular basis. I wonder how many farms in the north country went to the shed to start their generator and found that it didn't start this time.

What, you don't have a generator? If you are a dairy farmer, you need one. It is that simple! Generators are one of the cheapest insurance policy's you can buy. Add on top the lost income from missing one milking, it is easy to see how quickly they pay for themselves. Do we have numbers for this? No! Let's look at it this way though, a hundred cow herd will average 12 fresh cows per month (a non-seasonal herd with a 12 month calving interval). Skip one or two milkings on a fresh cow and what happens? She will dry off or drop so much in milk that you might as well dry her off. Also, let's look at your water system. Don't water the cows for a day and what happens to the tank level? A \$3000 generator represents 23,000 pounds of \$13 milk, one cow's annual production!

Finally, even if you do have a generator, is it the right size? When many of you have expanded cow numbers, did you increase the capacity of your generator? Many farms just forget about the generator till they need it and find they can't even milk with the one they have. I have a piece of software (from Katolight) that assists in sizing generators. I'm putting together an input sheet of information that is needed to do the calculation. Anyone interested in determining what size generator they need, give me a call and we'll do the calculations or if you have web access, you can download the software from the company (it is freeware) ([www.katolight.com](http://www.katolight.com)).